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Space Gamer

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FTL:2448 and *Fringeworthy* Featured Review

SUPERHEROES IN *TFT*
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STAR FLEET BATTLES TACTICS
THE JOYSTICK REPORT
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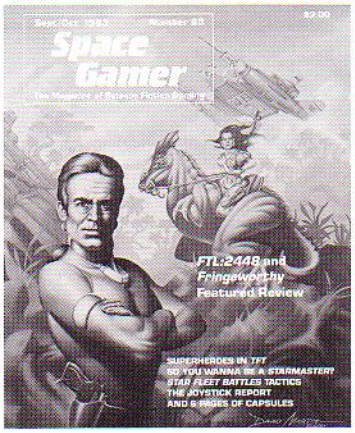
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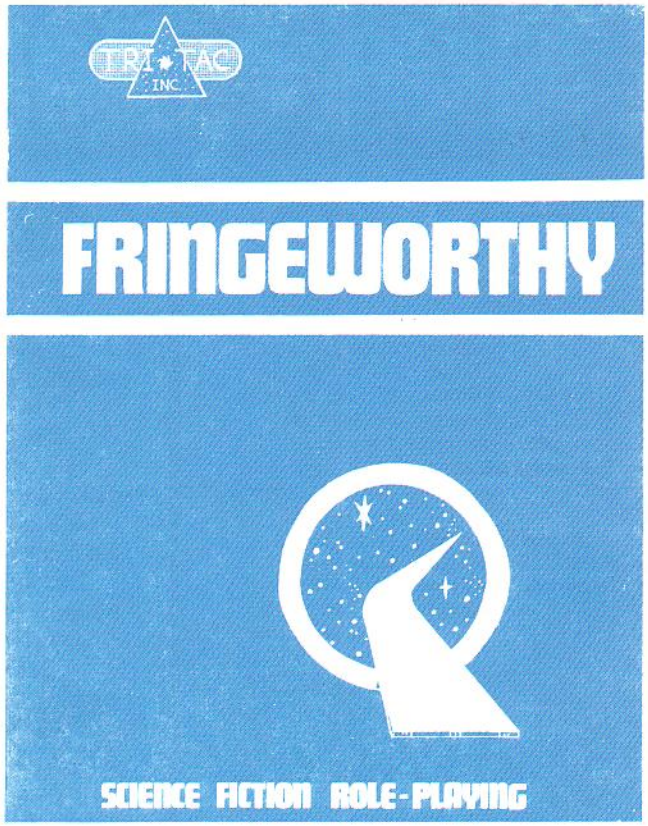
With Metagaming's loss and the delay of **In the Name of Justice**, we're not likely to see **TFT** superheroes soon right? Wrong — try page 19 . . .



Featured Review:

Diamond in the Rough?

FTL:2448 and *Fringeworthy*

by William A. Barton

Most gamers I know enjoy playing several different role-playing systems from time to time. Unfortunately, most RPGs use such different systems that new characters have to be generated for each campaign. Except for Chaosium with their interlocking ***Basic Role Playing/ RuneQuest***-based games, Hero Games with the ***Champions / Espionage*** system and, to some extent, FGU with the ***Aftermath / Bushido / Daredevils*** RPGs, most game companies seem to overlook this cross-over tendency on the part of gamers.

Enter Tri-Tac, Inc. "Who?" you might say, if you're not from the Midwest area and thus have never heard of Tri-Tac).

To enlighten those not in the know, Tri-Tac, Inc., is a small Michigan game company founded by Richard Tucholka, one of the designers of the excellent ***Morrow Project*** after-the-holocaust RPG. Tri-Tac has produced a line of inexpensive, off-the-wall games with names such as ***Escape from Westerville State, Geriatric Wars*** and ***Pteroducktyl***. These are games that are simple, wacky, and fun. No frills, no apologies, just a half-hour or so of crazy enjoyment each, usually costing $1.50 or less. Tri-Tac doesn't have big budgets, flashy production techniques or worldwide distribution. It only has gamers (the company is manned completely by gamers, not slick businessmen or PR hypers, etc.) – gamers who know what makes a good game and can produce items that companies such as TSR or GDW don't find profitable. They've got a sense of humor, which spills over into their games. Best of all, the folks at Tri-Tac, being gamers, have a pretty good handle on what gamers will like and find useful – such as RPGs that use the same basic systems, so that one doesn't have to waste a whole lot of time learning a whole new system when he wants to play another type of game.

Over the past year, Tri-Tac has released RPGs which use the same basic systems for character generation, combat and other overlapping areas: ***Fringeworthy*** and ***FTL: 2448*** (a third, ***Stalking the Night Fantastic***, geared to finding and stopping monsters in modern times, is due for release before this review sees print). ***Fringeworthy*** and ***FTL*** are notable in that they make use of the same game systems for ease of play and interplay, though each one should be considered a major new RPG.

Since they do share so much in common, however, they will both be covered in this review, with discussions of their joint systems and the differences due to the themes of each. To briefly note their subjects:

FTL: 2448 is a science fiction game of star travel, exploration and discovery of

EMPIRE

THE STAGE

EMPIRE is set in a galaxy dominated by six starfaring races. They have waged war against each other for thousands of years; just as the Roman Empire began to crumble under the burden of constant warfare, so have they. Wholesale destruction of planets and peoples was commonplace. Nuclear weapons were detonated indiscriminately on enemy worlds. Many proud races perished, never to be seen again.

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new worlds and races, with adventure situations building out of these. Superficially, it falls in the same category as earlier games such as ***Traveller, Space Opera*** and TSR's recent ***Star Frontiers***. Its background "history" and scope make it somewhat closer to ***SO*** than the other two, dealing with Terran-oriented near future in which several alien races figure as partners. Its systems (both the ones shared with ***Fringeworthy*** and those unique to ***FTL***) are much less complex than those of ***Space Opera***, but yet are more fully developed and less simplistic in most instances than those of ***Traveller*** or ***Star Frontiers***. ***FTL*** offers the completeness of detail found in ***SO*** and the playability of the other two games.

Fringeworthy, on the other hand, is one of those rare animals in RPG – an idea that hasn't already been done several times over. ***Fringeworthy*** concerns interdimensional travel to alternate realities (of Earth and conceivably of other planets and star systems that are also accessible) via portals and "fringepaths." Alternate dimensions and travel between them have been a mainstay of science fiction for some time. It's surprising no one thought of it as a vehicle for a RPG before this; it is to Tri-Tac's credit that they were the first. Both ***Fringeworthy*** and ***FTL*** are the designs of Tri-Tac founder Richard Tucholka. Aficionados of ***The Morrow Project*** need little more to assure them of the quality of these games. They certainly are not perfect (but what system is?), but they have much to recommend them.

"If you're less concerned with how the game plays than with gaudy cover paintings of ample-breasted females fighting side-by-side with wild-looking aliens . . . then look elsewhere."

Production

I'll turn to the problem of production on these games first. Simply put, if you're less concerned with how the game plays than with flashy graphics, gaudy cover paintings of ample-breasted females fighting side by side with wild-looking aliens, extra componenets (character sheets, maps, counters, GM shields, etc.) and the like, then look elsewhere. You won't find high-budget production frills in ***Fringeworthy/FTL***. (If you're looking for good gaming, on the other hand, read on . . .).

As noted, Tri-Tac is a small company that can't afford flashy graphics. Production on these games is poor to adequate. ***Fringeworthy*** has a plain blue cover, with silk-screened logo and illo of a portal, and comes bagged. ***FTL*** comes in a green plastic three-ring binder with cover logo and a starship in white. The three-hole-punched pages are color-coded by section for the easy addition of future expansions. Printing on both books seems to have been computer-generated rather than typeset, giving the text a cheap look. Bands of zipatone screen alternating with unshaded bands on tables (in the old SPI style) make a lot of the values covered by the screens difficult to read. Illustrations are cartoony and crude in places. And the text is riddled with misspellings, typos and grammatical errors that should have been caught in proofreading. If a company such as TSR or GDW had produced these booklets, I'd crucify them in print for this sort of thing. However, for a small company on a shoestring budget, these products aren't really that bad. If the game systems themselves were as ineptly done as the production, I'd think differently. But those who have enough presence of mind to look beyond the cover of a book will find themselves amply rewarded.

The Systems

Players of ***The Morrow Project*** will feel right at home with much of the character generation of ***Fringeworthy/FTL***. While several of the characteristics are different, and a few have been added, most are rolled up on 4D6-4, giving a range of 0-20 in the characteristics. Others are calculated based on combinations of the rolled scores. ***Fringeworthy*** has nine rolled characteristics – (Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Agility, Intelligence, Luck, Charisma, Wisdom and Accuracy) – and three that are calculated (Throw, which is the average of Strength, Dexterity and Accuracy; Dodge, the average of Strength and Agility; and Hit Points, which is Strength plus twice Constitution plus a D10 roll). ***FTL*** adds another rolled characteristic, Psionics, a calculated characteristic called Working Psi (which is Psi and Constitution averaged) and a Size characteristic derived from a table of "alien" sizes. All the characteristics function much as they do in other RPGs, though some need a bit more explanation: Dexterity governs hand-to-eye coordination and hand-to-hand combat, while Agility governs speed and coordination of movements: Intelligence is learning ability, while Wisdom is the ability to use sound judgment; Accuracy is what governs whether or not a target is hit in projectile combat; Working Psi is a reserve of psionic power. These character values and the skill levels possessed are the main parameters in defining a character in ***FTL*** or ***Fringeworthy***.

The number of different skills available in these systems is impressive. ***Fringeworthy*** boasts almost 200 different character skills, including extra-legal abilities; ***FTL*** adds skills designed specifically for use in space. For characters who wish to play doctors, there is an entire page of *additional* medical skills to choose from. Skills may be from work experience, technical school, military education, higher education, or self-teaching.

The number of skills a character may have is based on his intelligence. Characters may choose skills from only one area of learning (plus self-taught), with the skill levels being determined by dice rolls. One primary skill is received at a level of D4+4, two *related* secondary skills may be had at D4+2 levels, and the rest of a character's skills start at D4 levels. Each level equals 5% chance of success in that specific skill; thus, if D4+4 equals 6, the percentage chance is 30%.

Fringeworthy/FTL skill system is expecially nice in that not only is there a wide range of skills from which to choose, but that you *can* choose them, unlike ***Traveller***, in which skills are all randomly rolled. A lot of the skills may seem somewhat superfluous – how often is barbering going to be needed, or calligraphy? – but this can be considered quite realistic. Besides, how often in real life do we have skills or pieces of knowledge that are always applicable to the situation at hand?

The one really serious problem I find with the skill system is that the skills aren't defined at all; they're simply listed. I imagine this was due to the designer not wishing to restrict the possible uses of a skill with a limiting definition as in some games. Still, it leaves open the possibility of misinterpretation of certain skills. While not fatal, I think this lack of skill definition is definitely a flaw in the systems. And it is unfortunately repeated throughout the books in other places where charts,

tables and rules are not adequately explained.

To be fair, however, I must admit that I have yet to find a rule or table that I couldn't understand with careful reading. I think the problem stems from Tri-Tac's confidence in the ability of the average gamer to be able to figure things out without being led every step of the way. With the condescending approach some companies take, crediting players with little intelligence, this is refreshing – if somewhat inconvenient.

Another aspect of the skills system that bothered me (until I read further) was the fact that a character with the highest possible level in a skill only had a 40% success chance. Or so it seemed until I noted that the success chances of any *related* skills could be added in to the total. Tasks are rated for difficulty, with simple tasks having an almost automatic (95%) chance of success with the skill level added to *that*. Harder tasks have less chance of success, down to a -95% for tasks that are impossible. There are other modifiers to success – proper tools, materials, etc. – which make the skill use rules quite valid.

"A character reaching 10th level . . . will gain a minimum of 14 new hit points — and a maximum of 106! That's enough to allow a character . . . a chance of surviving a direct hit from a LAW."

Now I'm afraid I must point out the one part of character development in the ***Fringeworthy/FTL*** systems that I really don't like – the experience system. Personally, I prefer the Chaosium-type system in which skill levels increase as they are used successfully. I've never cared much for the ***D&D***-type experience systems in which experience points awarded for adventuring allow the *character* to rise in levels, each level giving him greater abilities until he becomes superhuman. Perhaps this can be overlooked in a *fantasy* game, but to me there's little place for it in science fiction.

A character reaching 10th level in the ***FTL/Fringeworthy*** system will gain a minimum of 14 new hit points – and a maxiumum of 106! That's enough to allow a character to stand up to point blank fire from an elephant gun or have a chance of surviving a direct hit from a LAW. (Under the combat system, however, hit points alone are not the only thing that determine death; depending on where a character is hit, there is a percentage chance of death shock, which can kill superpowerful characters just as easily as normal ones and which prevents the added hit point rule from being a fatal flaw.)

Combat in ***Fringeworthy*** and ***FTL*** is quite detailed, yet is surprisingly clean and playable. Time is divided into one-minute turns and two-second actions, an action being the minimum amount of time to perform a significant act, such as moving a short distance, firing a weapon, etc. Hit determination is by rolling less that (not equal to) your accuracy for firearms or your dexterity for hand-to-hand or melee weapons, on a D20. An admirable number of modifiers to this roll covers all likely combat situations, including range, size of target, movement on the part of the target and/or firer, terrain, weather and light conditions, and so on. The system is closer to ***Space Opera*** than most other systems (and very close, of course, to ***Morrow Project***).

Unlike ***TMP***, however, where damage is by the bullet's E-factor (a constant value), damage in the ***Fringeworthy/ FTL*** system is a factor of the bullet or shell, each type doing a certain amount of damage determined by a die roll. Armor can lessen damage, and damage can even be absorbed somewhat by the tougher tissues of the body (though this often has more serious consequences than taking straight damage). Aside from rules for firearms and other weapons, there are rules for determining damage from toxins and diseases (these are especially nice), radiation, shock, asphyxiation, falls, burns, blasts and so on – nearly everything you could imagine. I find this completeness most commendable, especially after years of playing games such as ***Traveller***, where damage other than that from guns, blades, or animals had to be arbitrarily made up due to lack of guidelines. The specific hit location tables are nicely detailed, if a bit abstract. They remind me somewhat of the old ***Bio-1*** tables, but are much easier to use. The tables in ***FTL*** have been updated from those in ***Fringeworthy*** for ease of play.

Those who like to have a long list of detailed weapon statistics will like the weapons sections in these books. ***Fringeworthy*** is the best of the two in this respect, since it details with a wide variety of realities and alternate ages of history. Pistols range from old hand cannons and wheellocks to modern magnums, rifles from muskets to ACRs, and SMGs from Thompsons to Uzis in the weapons tables. There is a wide array of blade and blow weapons as well, from chainsaws (for those Texas massacre fans) to whips and broken bottles. ***FTL*** doesn't have quite the range of weapons as its companion system, but it adds lasers and futuristic versions of the slugthrowers – not to mention ship-to-ship missiles, cannisters, lasers and particle accelerators in the starship section. Those who have ***Fringeworthy*** might note some missing material in the rocket launcher section. Apparently Tri-Tac's computer got a bit hungry and ate this; errata containing the missing material – and more – appears as ***Fringeworthy Portals and Pathways***, Book 0, and is available free to anyone who has purchased the game; just let Tri-Tac know.

The two systems share other common traits – some similarities will be found in world generation, along with several differences due to the focuses of each game, and many items of equipment appear in common on those tables (including the incredible statement on the food value table that bologna has twice the nutrition of vegetables!). But it is the differences that make each game unique, and it is to those that I turn now.

Fringeworthy

Of the two games, I must say I prefer ***Fringeworthy***. ***FTL*** is good, but ***Fringeworthy*** is a fresh idea in role playing. The game centers around the discovery in the late 20th century of an ancient base in Antarctica that permits interdimensional travel to certain individuals termed "fringeworthy" – those who can enter the portals and travel the fringe paths to other stations and to alternate worlds, other planets in our solar systems and other star systems. The portals and transfer stations, it turns out, were built by an ancient dimension-crossing race known as the Tehrmelern, who have disappeared form the fringes for reasons unknown. Unknown, that is, until fringe travelers begin disappearing and the Mellor make known their presence. (It wouldn't be fair to tell to much about the Mellor for those who have yet to learn through playing the game; let us just say they are rather "mushy" fellows and that they share some tendencies in common with Campbell's "The Thing".) Of course, the UN takes charge of the protal station and the search for individuals who are fringeworthy.

Eventually the IDETs (Inter-Dimensional Exploration Teams) begin to map out the stations and the various worlds to which the portals lead. Each station is

built as a circle with 12 portals. Four larger portals set 90 degrees from each other lead to other stations; the smaller portals lead to other worlds. Depending on the station, these other worlds can be alternate versions of our earth, versions quite similar to our world or radically different, alien places; other worlds in our solar system; worlds in nearby star systems; or alternate versions of these. The possibilites are limitless – which is what makes ***Fringeworthy*** such a versatile game. Virtually any reality which you wish to game can be found among the infinite number of worlds available to the fringeworthy. Medieval worlds, fantasy worlds with working magic and dragons, 1920s worlds, futuristic worlds – all can be encountered. There's even a portal that leads to the future world of ***FTL***, further linking the two games.

"Virtually any reality which you wish to game can be found among the infinite number of worlds available to the fringeworthy."

Most of the material in ***Fringeworthy*** that is different from ***FTL*** revolves around the fringepaths and portals, their operation, the worlds the Tehrmelern have left behind and the menace of the Mellor. Other material describes the various materials, vehicles and other factors involved in the exploration of the new worlds beyond the fringe. Most of this is quite good. There are a few oddities, here and there, but again nothing serious. I'd have liked to have had more vehicle descriptions than the four land vehicles and three aircraft that are used by the explorers. In the section on generating intelligent technological civilizations there's a roll that allows a technology of 1895-levels to have early orbital space flights – shades of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells – which seems a bit strange, until you remember that we're dealing with all possible alternate realities here. While somewhat sketchy, these tables can serve as an excellent framework on which a GM can build a new world, if he hasn't any ideas of his own. And several alternate worlds described from the playtest campaign, along with a short "scenarioette" in Book 0, should further help jog a GM's imagination, should he need it with a concept so flexible as this at hand.

FTL: 2448

FTL's main differences, of course, lie in that it is a SFRPG in the classic sense – the far future, starships, aliens and so on. ***FTL*** adds psionics to the system (though like in ***Morrow Project***, these are difficult to obtain, except for those alien races that are natural psionics). The medical section is expanded with the addition of the autodoc, familiar to science fiction. A future history is provided, one that, while dealing with the inevitabilites of war, economic oppression and other nasty by-products of civilization, is more positive than that of some games, such as the history of greed and decadence that seems inherent in ***Traveller***'s Imperium. As the year 2448 dawns, mankind has entered a period of renewed growth and expansion, exploration and individual freedoms in cooperations with several alien races. There's much more promise in the game than in ***Traveller***'s almost perpetual theme of fighting the oppression of the megacorporation and the sometimes heavy hand of the Imperium. Only FASA's ***Star Trek*** RPG meets or surpasses the positiveness I find in ***FTL***'s future. It's a nice feeling.

The aliens of the game system are refreshing, too. Whereas too many game systems either borrow heavily from existing SF novels for their aliens or produce dull, boring "aliens" like those found in ***Traveller***, ***FTL***, with a few exceptions, has produced some real *alien* aliens. Sure, the feline Dymnar are undoubtably derived from Larry Niven's popular Kzinti. But then there are the Blox, eight-legged, eight-armed, toothy balls of fur with an aptitude for bureaucracy; the four-armed, three-eyed, blundering Dabe; the genetically engineered, almost incomprehensible Krelvin; the Frendle, who look like a cross between crustaceans and lizards; and many others that, while strange, are also quite *fun* to play – more so than Aslan, Vargrs or hermaphroditic gumbyoids. There are also random generation tables for creating new alien races.

Other parts of the ***FTL*** system that differ from ***Fringeworthy*** are equally well-conceived, playable and fun to use. The star travel system is much simpler and easy to use than those of ***Space Opera*** or ***Traveller***. ***FTL***'s phase drive works very simply and logically, without dozens of calculations. Fuel use is simple and understandable, as is navigation in interstellar and interplanetary/orbital space. The same can be said of the starship combat system. I must caution readers that the starship section is one of those which will have to be read closely in places for complete understanding; you should have no problem if you take your time and cross-reference from section to section for explanations that seem to be missing. The only problem that really threw me was figuring out how to determine a phase drive failure. To save others some study, the answer is to subtract any points the drive has lost due to untuning from 100 and roll this value or less on D100 to avoid a drive failure.

Star system and world generation in ***FTL*** is quite detailed and is again a refreshing departure from ***Traveller***, where a system is nothing but the main world represented by a string of numbers, with no info on the star, other planets or anything else. While not quite as scientifically oriented as ***Space Opera***, ***FTL*** will give you a lot of information – probably more than you'll really need – about the spectral type of the star, whether it's a single, binary or mulitple, what planets it has and what type they are, and the characteristics of the main world, including atmosphere, geology, continents, oceans, ecology, intelligence, technology, culture and more. There's a lot more for the GM to work with here than in lesser systems, though, again, you'll need to read carefully in places for complete understanding. And if every detail isn't exactly true to scientific fact, at least the fudging's been done for the sake of playability, not rigid in-house dogma.

"Instead of spending time trying to fill in the gaps in the game design, you can get down to actually *playing*, because the designer has included charts, tables and guidelines for easy reference. . ."

FTL covers a lot of other aspects of future culture – robots, trade, space law, cargo, colonies – far more than can be dealt with in this review. Suffice it to say that the coverage in most instances is as good as, and often better than, in most comparable games. As a SFRPG, it's a good compromise between playability

and completeness. There are flaws and peculiarities, but none are serious obstacles to play. (For instance, in a recent Murphy's Rules, the fact that there was a 1% chance not to detect a gas giant at under 300 feet away was played up, ignoring the fact that for this to occur, one first had to miss the 99% chance to detect it at each of several other ranges, something that would only happen with malfunctioning instruments). ***FTL*** however, probably won't prove as popular ultimately as ***Fringeworthy***, should either or both of these games receive the attention they deserve, simply because the idea behind ***FTL*** has been done before. That's really a shame. Having played ***Traveller*** and ***FTL***, I prefer ***FTL*** for the simple fact that there's so much more that can be done with the system. Instead of spending time trying to fill in the gaps in the game design, you can get down to actually *playing*, because the designer has included charts, tables and guidelines for easy reference to cover what happens when you're exposed to radiation or your shuttle crashes or a bullet grazes your left shoulder. Instead of worrying about hese things, you can get down to role playing. The lack of restrictions on what you can or can't do in a scenario due to designer fiat, as evident in ***Traveller***, allows you to let your imagination roam and develop into some interesting games (last week our regular role-playing group used ***FTL*** to put TV's A-Team into space – it was silly, but it was fun!).

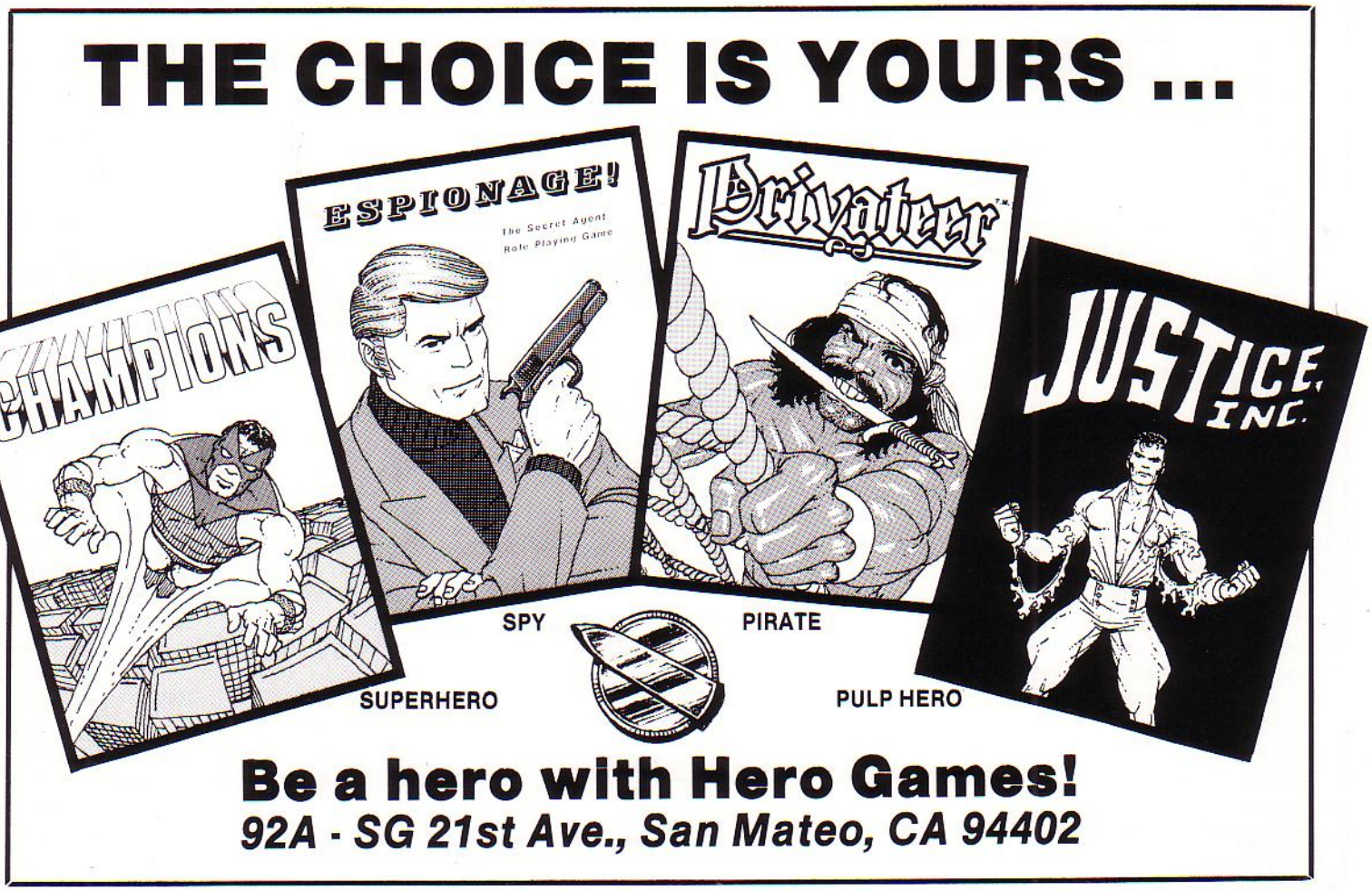
Of course, I don't expect a lot of people out there to abandon ***Traveller*** or ***Star Frontiers*** (if they're actually playing that), or whatever their favorite system is, for ***FTL***, although I'd suggest they give it a try before making that decision. But even if you insist on sticking with your own favorite SF system, I'd suggest picking up ***FTL: 2448*** as a sourcebook for filling in the gaps in that system. Unless you're playing ***Space Opera***, which is pretty complete already, ***FTL*** will neatly complement and fill in for a lot of missing info in ***Traveller, Star Frontiers, Star Rovers***, whatever. And despite what those who may criticize the game for its "overreliance" on tables and charts think, such items come in handy quite often – more so than fancy ship construction rules, vectors or elaborate trade systems.

Summary

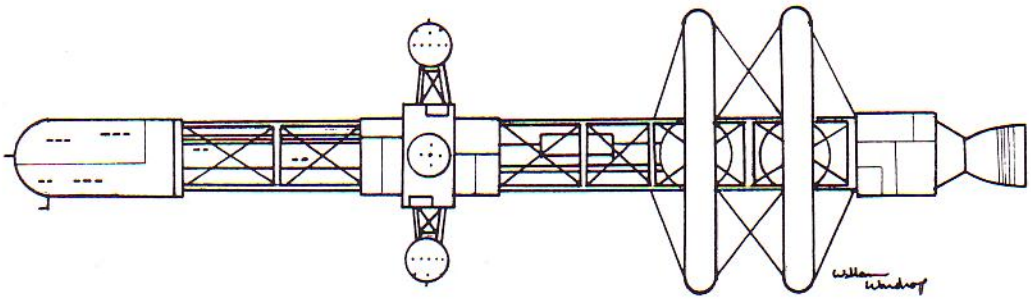
I guess the bottom line is that I *like* these games, despite their poor production, their sometimes faulty explanations their quirks and the experience system. They may look amateurish, but they certainly don't play that way. ***Fringeworthy*** I view as the most inventive of the recent new RP systems for its first-of-its-kind alternate worlds theme. I believe it to be deserving of an award of some sort for creativity and innovation. ***FTL***, while not treading any new paths, at least makes an admirable effort to cover aspects of play that too many other systems have ignored or made needlessly complex. If nothing else, I'd highly recommend it as a sourcebook for existing SFRPGs.

Above all, both games are fun. I enjoy playing them whenever the opportunity presents itself. That is perhaps the greatest recommendation I can give. So I urge you, look beneath the covers and give ***Fringeworthy*** and ***FTL: 2448*** a try. Even if you end up as Mellor bait, I doubt you'll be sorry.

Fringeworthy *and* **FTL: 2448** *are both designed by Richard Tucholka and published by Tri-Tac, Inc., P.O. Box 61, Madison Heights, Michigan 48071.* **Fringeworthy** *is an 8½" x 11" 78-page book, bagged, and retails for $12.00.* **FTL: 2448** *comes with 102 8½" x 11" pages in a plastic three-ring binder and retails for $14.00.* **Fringeworthy Paths and Portals**, *Book 0, and an errata sheet for* **FTL** *are available from Tri-Tac free of charge. Both games were published in 1982.*



FTL:2448 and Fringeworthy



Designer's Notes by Richard Tucholka

If you asked a number of game designers how their games came into being, you wouldn't receive any single answer. *We* began with a series of stories we'd written: The first was called "The Morrow Project" by Robert L. Sadler. Next was a space novelette, "Starheat," followed by "Symphony," my fantasy novelette of interdimensional war and the supernatural. That was ten years ago.

In the late 70s, we were searching for something more in games than killing orcs and rabbits, so we dusted off a few manuscripts and turned one of them into a "real" science fiction role-playing game – something called ***The Morrow Project.***

The Project was good, fun, and educational in a real-life sort of way. Bob's story made a great vehicle for my game systems. We had a few qualms with the ***Project***'s final draft, a few missing utility sections and skills, and a half page missing out of the PSI information, but it was good.

Shortly after ***The Morrow Project***'s publication, Bob and I suddenly found ourselves free of Timeline Ltd. and wondered what to do next. We were asked to join a new corporation, Tri-Tac, Inc., where we planned for the release of ***FTL: 2448***, a space role-playing game of the near future. The story "Starheat" and its companion "Ventura Odyssey" provided a fantastic yet plausible outline for mankind's near future. While working on ***FTL: 2448***, we became side-tracked on the concept of interdimensional exploration and quickly finished ***Fringeworthy***, a game on this topic; ***Fringeworthy*** became Tri-Tac's first RPG. It was based both on my story "Fringeworthy" and the Tehrmelern, an alien species created by my wife Kathy.

Fringe is unique among SFRPGs in that it uses a rational concept to open an easy path to a multitude of other worlds, times, and dimensions. For the role-player, this was an open invitation to create and use worlds as fantastic as the GM could imagine. Linking the worlds together with portals and walkways between dimensions made travel and exploration easy, and so the system was created along with a history of the Tehrmelern pathway builders. The Mellor race was included as a rare but necessary evil to explain the abandonment of the paths and to add a touch of continuing horror to what would otherwise be a game of simple exploration.

After serious funding and printing problems, we released the first edition in June of 1982. We learned, improved, found a new editor, and returned to production of ***FTL: 2448***.

Without the stock concepts of a galactic empire and murderous aliens, ***FTL*** would be a realistic look at the future a few hundred years from now. We wanted a usable and complete game system, as simple as ***Fringeworthy***, but with more detail. ***FTL*** expanded the role-playing systems of ***Fringeworthy*** but added new ideas and some necessary revisions. ***FTL: 2448*** became the grubby, but hopeful, future where mankind is working for the betterment of itself and alien races.

For ***FTL*** we tried a new packaging concept by using a rules binder which could be updated or revised. We never realized that most gaming distributors don't like binders. Someone also started a nasty but untrue rumor that the pages fall out of the binder.

As role-players, we wanted game systems that were easy to use. In an action situation, it's never any fun to run through a flow chart for half an hour to resolve a single action. We set our sights on a lot of utility and technical realism without sacrificing playability. We began with character generation.

When you design a character, you want detailed information and the freedom to develop a character's talents and personality. We started with the 4d6-4 system of statistics creation suggested by Mark Lardis. (It gives nice bell curves and is easy to relate to a percentile or 20-sided roll.) We used a few of the usual statistics and began to see that we needed a few more: Dexterity and Agility had to be separate; Throw, Dodge, Luck, and Accuracy became later additions. Skills were created and a system was designed for their use involving levels of difficulty. A system of experience levels was added to give players the ability to improve their characters and skills.

Damage tables cover most contingencies of damage in the game. Damage became a problem until we realized that there are two distinct and yet related systems that give the player-character his health. Constitution became the first set of "hit" points and general body structure the other. Many types of killing damage do very little actual physical damage (strangulation, radiation, poisoning, etc.)

Our original body tables for ***The Morrow Project*** were replaced here by a simpler, less detailed system. We furnished one of the most detailed but easy-to-use medical systems created to date for an RPG.

One of the most complex areas of the book is the Detail Body tables. Working with a local forensic expert, I broke the human body down into (roughly) one-inch squares and catalogued them into a simple system of what's generally at each location. From there we set death percentages and other details. This system is great for showing firearm damage and can

Art above courtesy Tri-Tac, Inc.

be generalized for animals. With a little imagination, you will find that it can be used three-dimensionally. It even helps in a wide range of other uses never suspected while it was being designed – including bone breakage, shrapnel hits and knife damage to specific areas.

SF gamers enjoy the use of modern firearms, especially known brands and specific types. The only problem involves designing a system for using them which everybody likes and agrees with – I learned this early. The fun part was the flak we got from "armchair gun experts" who criticized picky little mistakes on load speed, grain weight, and the guns' general performance in combat situations.

In ***Fringeworthy***, we covered necessary historic weapons that could be found across a wide time period. ***FTL*** did not need such a range and included a firearms generation table. ***Stalking the Night Fantastic***, a soon-to-be released game, will cover a very wide range of modern and special weapons including a few popular brands.

Morrow's E factor worked well, but was a bit static in regard to damage. (The variable E table was lost somewhere in editing the first edition.) Later, unable to use our ***Morrow*** systems, we settled on a dice of damage system to give the general punch of a bullet through a set mass, indexed by the bullet's type and range. A few "experts" have disagreed with the system, though most find it playable and fast. In the near future, a second weapon damage system will premiere on our Equipment and Weapons supplement as an alternate system. Damage will be related to projectile weight, caliber, velocity, and a few thousand other factors.

One of the most exciting design areas for us was the creation of a system to generate cultures on human and alien worlds. With three years of college sociology and a smattering of anthropology, I pondered the general validity of the Technological Levels so universally used in gaming. Rather than using Tech levels, we designed a system of designing a technology from the ground up, starting with the use of energy. As a GM generates a society, the general levels of the society's general advancement in a large number of social and technological areas are created. This gives a far wider and more interesting development to a culture than a general tech-level system. In a future ***Fringeworthy*** and ***FTL: 2448*** supplement, we will expand upon the development of societies, each tailored to its respective game.

At Origins, Tri-Tac, Inc. will release our new RPG, ***Stalking the Night Fantastic***, a game of hunting the evil supernatural of the 1980s. The agents of Bureau 13, a super-secret government organization, travel the roads of America in search of the supernatural. The book will include more than 100 types of encounters, character design, and a realistic magic system in 104 pages. Rules for ***Stalking*** are designed in the same format as ***FTL*** and ***Fringe***, with many internal improvements. ***Stalking*** will retail for $13. By the end of the summer, we will also be releasing an adventure and expansion module for each of our RPGs as well as a universal Systems Shield for ***Fringeworthy***, ***FTL*** and ***Stalking***. The shield may be ready for Origins.

Upcoming supplements will include ***Starpirates*** for ***FTL: 2448***, and an ***FTL*** catalogue of ship designs, plans, and heavy equipment. A universal (historical to modern and beyond) catalogue of weapons, equipment, and vehicles for RPGs is in the works.

Our long-term plans are for the games to be boxed by the end of 1983. ***FTL: 2448*** will move from a binder to a book format and three systems expansions will create new games with use of existing products. These include: ***Rogue 417***, after-the-holocaust survival for use with ***Fringeworthy***; ***Hagu***, the alien invasion of Earth, for use with ***Fringeworthy***; and ***FTL: 3248***, the 800-year expansion of ***FTL***. And then there's ***Fringemagic***, but that's for the future.

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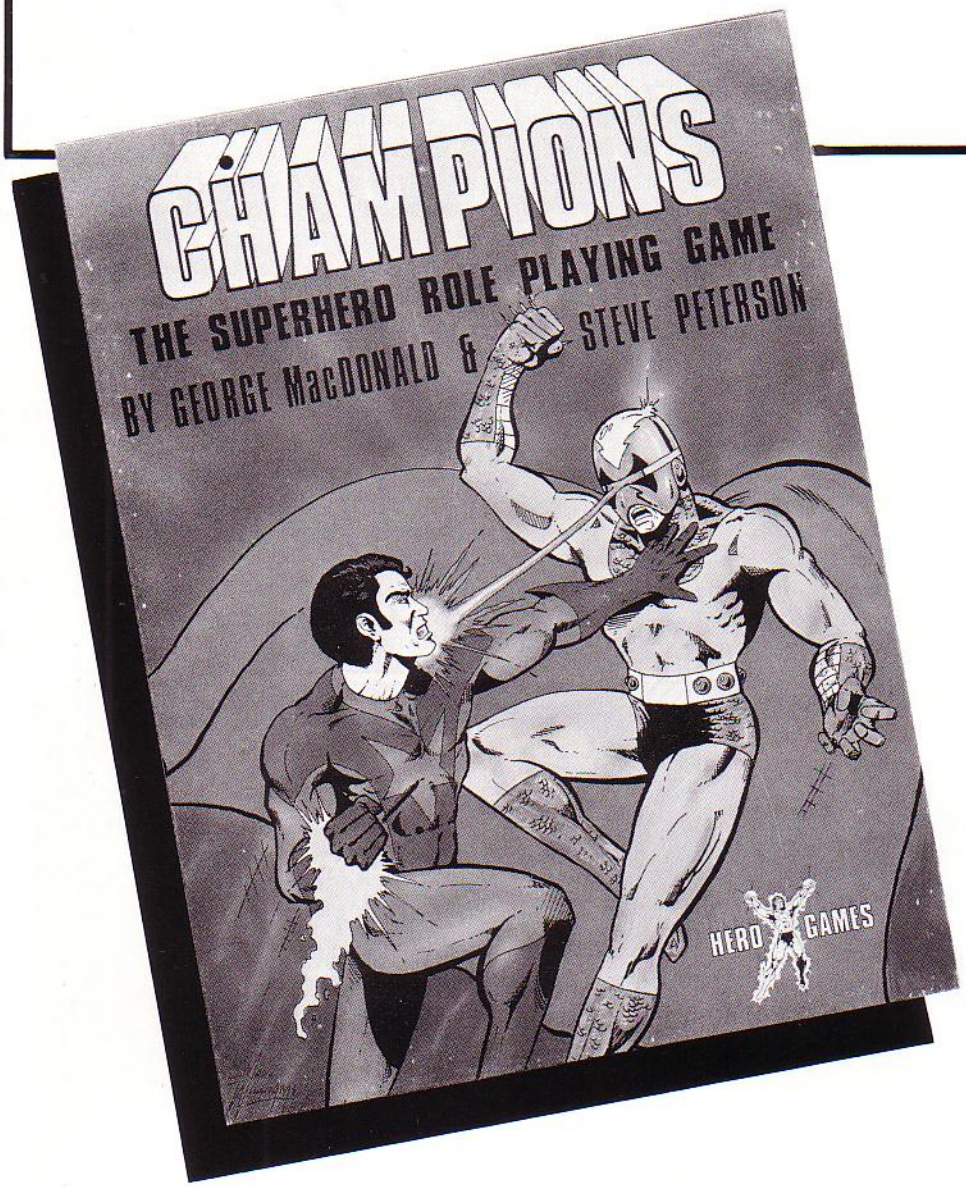
Featured Review: CHAMPIONS

by Russell Grant Collins



Champions has been revised and reissued. Since the basic game has already been reviewed (*Space Gamer* 43), this review will serve more to introduce those familiar with the game to changes in the game system.

The revision is particularly good news if you referee the sort of players who like to create superheroes who are tougher than Superman by taking advantage of loopholes in the rules. For example, buying Increased Endurance Cost and Reduced Endurance Cost for the same power once resulted in a low-cost power that was very strong yet cost little Endurance to use. This is now illegal. So is using a Multipower within an Elemental Control or vice versa.

The basic game system is unchanged. Most of the powers are the same, although occasional modifications have been made to improve the game. Combat in Darkness and the use of Invisibility are explained. A power advantage to counteract Armor Piercing attacks has been added. More examples are used. The "Breaking Things" rules from the ***Stronghold*** scenario is expanded and here made the official damage system for objects.

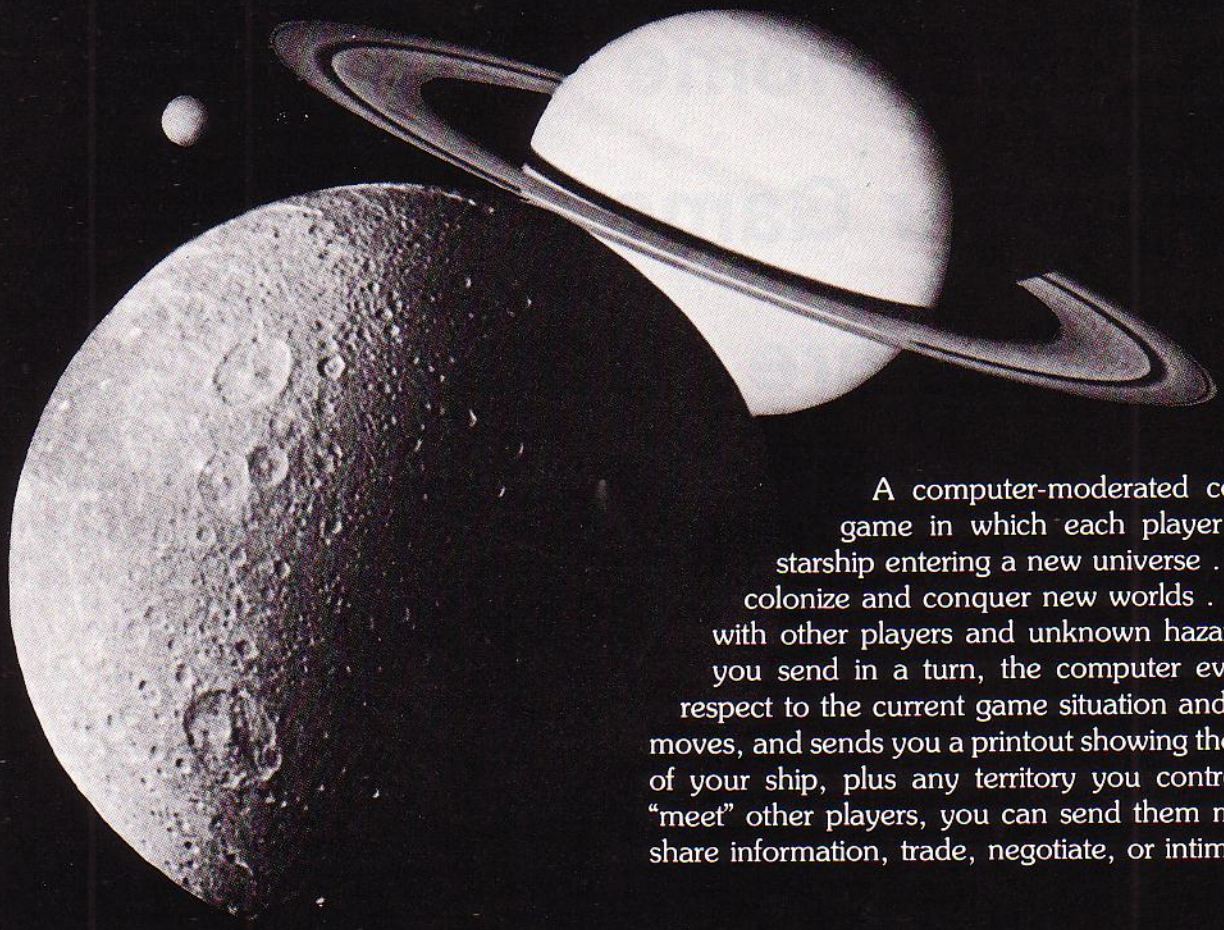
The scenario book, ***Viper's Nest***, has three adventures pitting newly-created heroes against the hordes of Viper. These adventures are nice with beginning heroes, but less challenging if the characters or players are experienced. A hero with Ego powers can easily eliminate the need for the second scenario, and is hard to limit in any of the three. Also, the information on UNTIL is not as complete as in the game's first edition. Since it is the primary lawful-agent group in the ***Champions*** cosmos, this omission is distressing. The information for ***Microfilm Madness*** in *Space Gamer* 61 fits in here nicely (as does the scenario) and it should have been here. *(Actually, **Microfilm Madness** was indeed written for **Viper's Nest**; it was cut for space considerations and subsequently submitted to SG. –AA)*

I also wish that the rulebook were available separately, for those of us who would like the revised rules but don't need the scenarios, map or dice again.

Should you buy this material? I think so, if you are interested in superhero RPGs. If you hated the original ***Champions*** rules for more than their slight omissions and loopholes, don't bother. The changes aren't all that significant. If you're happy with the old version, weigh your decision carefully. Your players will grumble if their characters need drastic revision, as some probably will. If you do get the new set, much of the old book becomes obsolete, so it won't even serve as a backup copy. On the other hand, the new material is very useful. I don't regret having made the change, but you might. Be warned, though, that any new material Hero Games releases will be based on the revised rules.

***Revised Champions** (Hero Games); $14.95. Designed by George MacDonald and Steve Peterson. One 8½ x 11" 80-page rulebook, an 8½ x 11" 16-page **Viper's Nest** scenario book, a 17 x 22" hex-map with a street perspective printed on one side, and 6 six-sided dice, boxed. Published 1982.*

UNIVERSE III



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The Joystick Report: A Look at Home Computer Game Hardware

by W.G. Armintrout

The War of the Joysticks has begun.

The homes of America, filled with video and computer game systems, are beginning to hunger after more sophisticated control systems. Arcade-quality joysticks. Home trackballs. *Space Gamer* has begun to receive equipment for review. This, then, is our report.

A basic joystick consists of four components: the Stick, the Base on which the stick is connected, the Firing Button, and the cord which connects it to the game system being used.

The Stick produces nine different signals, depending on which position it is in. With Atari systems, these positions and their code numbers are:

15 –	normal position	6 –	front/right
14 –	front	5 –	back/right
13 –	back	9 –	back/left
7 –	right	10 –	front/left
11 –	left		

Contrary to popular myth, joysticks do *not* care how far or hard they are pushed. A "gradual left" and a "hard left" are all the same to the joystick. (The next time you see a player struggling to bring his starship through a tight turn, his knuckles white on the stick, remember to chuckle.)

The Firing Button is even simpler – it is either in its normal position, or it is being pushed, and so it tells the machine. Like the Stick, the exact function of a Firing Button in any game depends entirely on the game program – it might fire shots, provide thrust, or cue an information display. That has nothing to do with the joystick itself.

Reviewing a joystick is largely a question of taste. Assuming that it works correctly and doesn't fall apart, any analysis comes down to such subjective questions as: Is it responsive? Is it comfortable to hold? Is the firing button(s) convenient? Is the cord long enough?

Or, in short: *Can I get a better score with it?*

The following joystick reports are based on the responses of a number of arcade experts recruited for this project. Joysticks were tested with several games, both on video and computer game systems. Each reviewer was required to put in sufficient time to become familiar with the joystick in question before making his review.

Joystick Controller (Atari). $9.95*

Base 3½" x 3¾". Stick 3". Cord 4'. Firing button on base.

This is the old familiar joystick from Atari. Those clamoring for the new wave of equipment claim its defects are:

- Base too small for adult hands.
- Cord too short (at least, it is when a half dozen people are fighting over who gets to play ***Frogger*** next).
- The Stick begins to feel wobbly after time.
- The Firing Button has a "cheap" feel.

Two of those claims are misleading. The "wobbly" Stick and "cheapish" Button have little to do with play performance – the joystick works just fine, regardless of the feel. "Feel" is only a psychological factor. And the Stick, while short, has the advantage that it can be worked with only thumb and forefinger.

Command Control Joystick (WICO). $28.95

Base 4½" x 4½" x 1½". Stick 5". Cord 5½'. Switch on the base selects between two Firing Buttons – on the base, and at the top of the stick.

This is the standard joystick from WICO, a commercial arcade game control manufacturer now branching out into home arcade accessories. Its good points include:

- Well-engineered Base, with finger rests and grip pads for table-top use.
- Very easy-to-use "bat handle" Stick.
- One-hand operation (assuming you have it on a table top, and use the stick-top Firing Button.
- Excellent, built-to-last construction.

Two points can be raised against it. First, it is heavier than the Atari joystick you may be used to – that will take some time to become familiar with. (It isn't *too* heavy – just heavier than you're used to.) Second, the extra-long Cord provides length at the expense of storage. The extra-long Cord means there is that much more Cord to try to wind up after use, or to trip over.

The Champ #1 (Championship Electronics Inc.). $12.95

Base 6" diameter x 2" (saucer shaped). Stick 6". Cord 10', retractable. Two non-selectable Firing Buttons: forward "trigger" and stick-top.

The Champ has an eye-catching style and a number of innovative features, which include:

- "Directionless" Base. Instead of pushing the Stick towards the word "top" on the Base, the Champ's Stick has a front (where the trigger is). Pushing the Stick forward always means "top", regardless of where the Base is facing.
- Retactable Cord.
- Just the "look" of the joystick impresses some people – frankly, it looks as though it were lifted out of somebody's cockpit.

The strikes against it are:

- Reliability. It uses calculator key action, which will not wear as well as the components used by the other joysticks on review. (One of our Champs broke down during evaluation.)
- Awkwardness. The round base is hard to get a good grip on, *and* hard to set on a table top.
- Weight. (This is a problem only for those who don't totally unwind the retracted Cord before play.)
- Buttons. While the forward Trigger button works fine, it is hard to use the stick-top button without hitting the Trigger button. For all practical purposes, this should be considered a single button joystick.

For a practical evaluation, our experts chose their favorite game and used each of the joysticks. Our question: Did any joystick have a significant effect on point scores?

To our amazement, there were no correlation. Once familiar with a joystick, a player seemed to work with it just at well as with any other joystick (despite how much he cursed the stick or complained about its design).

(I, who find The Champ hard to use, managed to set my personal high score record at ***Star Raider*** using it . . .)

As for popularity, the Command Control joystick ranked slightly ahead of the Champ. The Command Control stick is unanimously agreed to have an excellent design and quality guts. On the other hand, the Champ's look and style were what more people wanted – deterred only by what some felt was an awkwardness problem.

Yet the point to be remembered was that there was no connection between the joystick used and the points scored. In that respect, the old Atari product – much maligned as it is – proved to be equal to all of its competitors, and at a lower price.

On to trackballs.

A trackball is a ball mounted in a box, along with a Firing Button and a Cord. It provides a

*All prices based on local retail at the time of writing.

game machine with the exact same signals that a joystick would, though it mixes and matches the signals depending on the direction and speed with which the ball is rolled.

Trackballs are *not* limited to ***Missile Command*** only. They can work with almost any game. A trackball's advantage is that it gives precise control, much finer than a joystick. It excels at positioning cross-hairs over an enemy target, or at positioning pieces in a computer boardgame such as chess. In order for it to give a constant command, however – such as "right" – the player must keep spinning the ball to the right in order to keep the command going.

A trackball, for instance, works fine with computer chess. (I even like it with ***Eastern Front (1941)***, though you have to be careful when giving orders – the computer game gives an annoying *buzz* whenever you accidentally hit a diagonal.)

A trackball is an interesting experience in a game like ***Star Raider***, where it is required to both center cross-hairs when firing and manuever the ship during combat. It shoots magnificently, but bringing the ship around to face an enemy to aft is a good way to wear your hand off.

A trackball has no business playing a maze game like ***Pac-Man***, where there is no need for precision and diagonal orders are disregarded. Trying to keep up with the speed of a joystick in such a game would be impossible.

Command Control Trackball (WICO). $70

Base 5" x 6" x 2". Ball is 2" across at the Base. 5½' Cord. Single base-mounted Firing Button (two buttons on the Apple II version).

I will admit to being amazed when I pulled this device out of its box. The box art, which I had seen in the stores, had led me to expect a lightweight box with a Ping Pong-style plastic ball. The box art is totally deceiving – this unit comes with a ball that looks like you can play pool with it, solid and heavy, and the base is built to match.

WICO claims this design is identical to the one they put in arcade machines. I cannot fault them – I have seen *smaller* trackballs in arcades.

Good features include:

- Thick, long cord (though storing it is a problem).
- Non-skid rubber feet for tabletop use.
- Excellent, built-to-last workmanship.

The bad points, none serious, are:

- The ball will not perform correctly if tilted more than 30 degrees or thereabouts. Therefore, it is best used on a tabletop rather than handheld. (It is also heavy for holding in your hands, unless braced on a leg or arm of a sofa.)
- The Firing Button sinks rather deep into the Base, and is hard to fully depress without arching your thumb. (Then again, you don't need to push the button down all the way to make it fire.)
- The Ball takes colors very easily – keep small kids and magic markers away from it!

There seem to be minor variations in models. Some trackballs are depicted as having finger rests, which mine does not – but they aren't important in a trackball.

There's no question in my mind that the Command Control trackball is a superior product. It is better than a joystick for some purposes, particularly games of the ***Missile Command*** style and computer boardgames (!). The only question is whether you really want a trackball, particularly at this price.

Comparing trackballs to joysticks is like comparing apples to oranges, but our panel of reviewers tried out all of the joysticks versus the trackball with the game ***Star Raider*** (where both devices have their advantages and disadvantages). It took a while before players were familiar with the feel of the trackball with such a game, but when they were (and to our surprise) the trackball was competitive score-wise with any of the joysticks. The reviewers, however, were sharply but evenly divided between those who liked using the trackball in that type of game and those who did not.

In summary: We couldn't prove that any arcade control device will improve your game. The Command Control products are quality products (but at a quality price). The Champ is stylish but imperfect. The old Atari joystick, wobbly and cheapish, still works just fine.

Choosing among them is a matter of taste and money. Get your hands on one and try it *before* you buy.

Atari Joystick Controller, the Champ, and Command Control products are directly compatible with the Atari Video System, Sears Video Arcade, Atari 400/800/1200 computers, Commodore VIC-20 computer, and the NEC PC-6001. With WICO adaptors, the Command Control joystick will work with Odyssey Video Games (plug-in controls), Radio Shack TRS80 Color Computer, and Apple II and Texas Instruments home computers. A Texas Instruments joystick will be released this year. Special Command Control trackballs will work with Texas Instruments Home Computers, Apple II, TSR80 Color Computers, Odyssey Video Games and (later this year) the IBM home computer.

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So You Wanna Be a *Starmaster*?

by Stefan Jones

StarMaster, the grand-strategic PBM game run by Schubel & Son, has received a lot of negative criticism for various reasons. Many who enter, or order the rulebook out of curiosity, are put off by the "hidden" turn fees. Others, even those with big bank accounts, find that the often vague and poorly-explained rules make play difficult or impossible. As a result, many potential or new players never start the game, or drop their empires after the first turn for a refund. However, it's a game worth playing, in spite of its flaws. This article is written for people who are thinking about joining the game, and want to know what they are getting into.

The Dough Problem

The ads for *SM* state, somewhat deceptively, that the turn fees are $3.50. This is only partially true: For this basic fee, the player gets to produce ships, ground units, and forts on his or her homeworld, may move six forces of ships to different destinations, and perform one exploration order at those destinations (such as mapping a world, doing a preliminary survey of a solar system, or scanning deep space for usable systems). That is basically all; for $3.50, *SM* is a fairly good space exploration game. Everything else – colonization, trade, combat, diplomacy and special actions – costs another $3.50 per each type of action.

Schubel & Son has stated in the rulebook that these extra turnsheets and actions are optional; this is true in the sense that no one at the company forces you to use them (except for an occasional $1.50 defense fee, mandatory if your forces are attacked by another player or GM-controlled "Bogey" force). But in order to get anything near the full potential enjoyment from the game, you will need many or most of the "optional" turnsheets. Potential *SM* players, be warned: If you plan to do any conquering, building of vast empires, or advancing in technology or exploration beyond a few standard orders and fairly simple special actions, don't count on spending less than $7.00 a turn.

In The Beginning

The most important single turn that a player of *SM* will ever write out is the setup of his empire. In this turn, the player designs his species, using a list of body parts and a budget of "bio-points," and constructs his homeworld. The homeworld design is of tremendous importance: Its size determines the amount of P.F. (Production Factors) that will be available each turn, the amount of population available, and, indirectly, the level of initial technology; the larger the world, the greater the production.

I would suggest a very large world for a player's first game; a world of 200 earth-masses (equal to six earth-gravities; the number of "megacities" on-planet is equal to "g" times 200, and determines the basic productivity of the world) is generally a good base. Larger worlds tend to have increasingly primitive ground-military technology, but remain roughly equal to the average in aerospace and industrial technology. The atmosphere and terrain of a player's homeworld are generally only important when the player colonizes other planets: The attrition of the colonists depends on how similar the colony is to the homeworld environment.

Very large and very small worlds will have different types of technology and weapons, but though they differ in detail, the weapons of the three different tech types (Hot, Cold and Chemical) are equal in combat at similar levels of technology.

The race a player chooses has initial effects on technological level at the beginning of the game (species with improved senses or extra intelligence start three to four tech levels higher than those of a relatively human species on a similar world), and continuing effects on ground combat: Very strong, agile, fast, or tough races get bonuses when fighting planetside. Another factor is a species' society type: Choices include Individual, like humans; Caste, like a termite nest; or Hivemind, animal-like creatures joined by telepathy in a "gestalt." Caste systems allow the player to design two to six specialized castes under the control of a psionic leader, and can provide for some interesting characteristics, but they also build spaceships at a slower rate than Individual intelligence races. However, they can often trade profitably with Individual species due to differences in trade prices, another point in their favor. Hiveminds are able to take outrageous measures and liberties with its species' individuals, but are otherwise not recommended. New players should stick to Individual or Caste species. If a species comes out wretched, don't despair: At second-generation technology,

some useful bio-engineering projects can help repair the damage.

Once a player has had his race and homeworld placed in the game, the first order of business is exploration. Use the pre-game production to build some fast scout ships, enough to scan the nearest (adjacent) 26 sectors to your home map-cube. Ask for a second turnsheet so you can move nine or ten scanning forces and have a few ships left over to send to planets in your home system. On the first few turns, the GMs are not checking for existing systems in the map-cubes your vessels scan: They check each cube for the possibility of a system, and randomly generate them as they turn up. If you do things right, you can "find" a few systems conveniently close to home.

The Turnsheets

Each turnsheet type has its uses, though some are more useful than others. A description of each is given below.

The Colony Status Sheet: This sheet is used when moving ships full of colonists to new worlds. The attrition and remaining population at a colony is computed each time new people are brought in. The six movement blocks on the sheet can also be used to move forces of ships which are not doing any exploration, combat or trade, which is handy if you're only setting up one colony on a given turn.

New players should start building transports as soon as possible, and as soon as two or three likely planets are located, begin shipping out settlers. A force can move several times in a turn, using one movement block each time, given sufficient movement points. This will allow you to start a fleet of colonist-carrying ships at your homeworld, and move the force between homeworld and colonies two or three times on one sheet. Make colonies *big:* The more units you have on a world, the more freighters the colony can service, the greater the volume of trade, and the higher the potential return per turnsheet.

Once you have set up several large colonies and/or have found friendly players or neutrals, start trading. Start a force of freighters at your homeworld and move it between worlds in the route most profitable per ship. Trade between species of different society type is three to four times as profitable as with a similar species.

Trading results in E.U., economic units, which are worth 100 million dollars each. These units can be used to bribe neutrals, pay for special engineering projects, research new weapons, and examine ancient artifacts. Most importantly, E.U. can be used to raise the technological levels of the player's empire. This is vitally important; higher tech levels mean greater production, deadlier weapons, and faster spaceships. Because of the design of the space combat system, a spaceship of a tech level twice that of another ship of equal size can outfight that vessel two-or-more to one. Ships become more cost-efficient as tech levels rise, carrying more guns per ton of ship. Trade is absolutely vital to raising technology, and thus important to your empire's success.

Combat Turns: Any sort of attack that requires digging through records or computer time costs the attacker $3.50. The cost of an assault on a village of pygmies is the same, in cash terms, as a massive battle between space fleets. You must thus judge the real worth of a battle before attacking. If you plan to plunder a world which will yield a measly 5000 E.U., you may be better off using the money to do another trade sheet. Stick to peaceful resolution of conflicts unless you're into expensive entertainment.

"Fortunately, such big guys stick to blasting each other. If you meet one, be friendly but be prepared to move your capital . . ."

Diplomacy: This type of turnsheet is used to deal with the NPCs of the game. These range from primitive races armed with swords to the vast elder races of yore. Like Combat turns, they are only of value when you stand to profit by the diplomacy. If you're lucky, you may be able to merge your civilization with a Hermit neutral and gain access to its high technology, or get a trade pact with a neutral with excellent trade prices; on the other hand, you may never even find a neutral.

Special Actions: This is one of the game's most useful turnsheets. Special Actions (S.A.) allow a player to do things not normally allowed by the basic rules. If a colony world has too-high attrition, the player can use an S.A. sheet and a few E.U. to suggest extra measures of equipment that the colonists will use to improve their chances. Special training can be given to soldiers to earn a combat bonus; spaceships can have ECM pods or holographic projectors added for increased effectiveness. Ancient artifacts and captured ships can be analyzed to learn their secrets; crafty maneuvers can be used to sway neutrals. Properly written and backed up with E.U.s and other resources, an S.A. can lead to increased tech levels, bonuses to production or combat, or new knowledge of great importance. S.A.s can pay for themselves by increasing the effectiveness of other turnsheets. If you start play in *SM*, ask friends and allies for ideas for S.A.s. They are worth the money and add a personal touch to the game.

The Political Situation

What will you meet up with if you join *SM*? New players are set up in "developing regions," with other new players of roughly equal ability. As time passes, interstellar society develops, in the form of trading and defense alliances. Eventually, larger alliances form, with tens or hundreds of members, and these begin fighting. Reassuringly, the "nice" alliances tend to last longer than the evil ones, but the latter add much flavor to the game and give your empire a reason to grow and spread out.

Another factor is the mega-empires, vast multi-world empires who loot and plunder millions of Production Factors and run multi-million E.U. trade lines. Properly run, any empire can rise to this status, but they are very rare. Some, such as the dread Valk Lifewringer's Vakyrians, have single-handedly blasted entire planets to dust and atomized billions of man-years of labor. Fortunately, such big guys stick to blasting each other. If you meet one, be friendly but be prepared to move your capitol to a secluded colony.

Unless you're in the game for the fun of it, don't think mindless combat after combat will make your empire strong. The good guys don't always win, but they do tend to live longer. If you need to loot to keep growing, stick to conquering dropped player-empires (there are *lots* of these, officially of neutral status) and the larger neutrals; they are easier to conquer and don't have allies who'll go after *you!*

Conclusions

StarMaster is not a game for everybody; it takes patience, imagination, and lots of money. But if you want to try a simulation that will show you how detailed and sophisticated a PBM game can be, try it.

Fleet Tactics in *Star Fleet Battles*

by Walt Mizia

In ***SFB*** fleet actions, a gamer will have to make many decisions about the distribution of his fleet's firepower. This article will identify these choices and provide tips to help the gamer determine which options are the best in given circumstances. Note that this article presumes that ***SFB*** Expansions 1, 2, and 3 are in use.

In fleet actions, fleets will array themselves in one of two ways: As a dispersed group, with wide separation between individual ships, or as a tight formation, with ships separated by no more than one or two hexes,

Dispersed formations have few virtues. They can cover a wide front, but not efficiently. The space between the ships of a dispersed fleet prevents the ships from supporting each other. The potential use of weapons in mass is wasted due to the different firing angles and myriad of ranges that will occur with widely separated platforms. Coordinated attacks on single targets are not possible. The shots will hit different shields, dissipating the attacks. Dispersed ships cannot mount a coherent defense against fighter and drone assaults. Defensive phasers cannot be concentrated against a threat. Each portion of a dispersed fleet is subject to a sudden enemy action – especially massed fire concentrated on unsupported elements.

A tight formation, on the other hand, has the effect of creating a super ship. The massed weapons bear on the enemy equally and from the same angle. The heavy weapons (disruptors, photon torpedoes, drones, and plasma torpedoes) can pound the enemy from long range. The phasers, ADDs, and shuttles form an invincible screen, turning aside enemy drone and fighter attacks. Targets can be singled out and decimated by salvos that strike the same shield, penetrating it, ripping into the vitals of the enemy starship.

Lesson Number One: Concentrate the force for mutual support and to focus the massed firepower of the fleet.

In multi-ship engagements, the main objective is the reduction of the enemy fleet at a faster rate than the friendly fleet is reduced. To accomplish this goal, it may seem logical to fire at as many enemy ships per turn as possible. All this does is to spread the fire over many targets, allowing the shields of the enemy to absorb the hits. The best use of the fleet's firepower is to concentrate it against one target each turn. With up to ten ships firing, an enemy is subjected to the same amount of hits as he would receive in ten turns of normal ship-to-ship combat. Over ten turns, the enemy has the opportunity to reinforce his shields ten times. When all this damage is inflicted in one turn, nine turns of potential shield reinforcement is negated and all the extra damage is applied directly to the destruction of internal systems. When a ship is hit with up to one hundred points of internal damage in one turn, it does not stay around long to return fire.

Lesson Number Two: Concentrate fire on one target each turn to effectively use the fleet's firepower.

When choosing which enemy ships to fire at, remember that the strongest ship will be the hardest to reduce. For example, the Federation heavy cruiser and the Federation destroyer have identical weapon suites. However, the destroyer's forward shield of twenty boxes is only two-thirds the strength of the heavy cruiser's thirty boxes. The destroyer has only one-half the power generation capacity of the heavy cruiser, further reducing the potential defensive protection of reinforced shields. A blast of twenty-five damage points on the destroyer will eliminate the forward shield and cause five internal hits. The same attack on the heavy cruiser would not penetrate the shield. Obviously, in the first few turns, the destroyer-types are the preferred targets. As the battle progresses, the choice of targets will not be so cut and dried, as various ships take damage and lose offensive firepower; but one principle will remain: Attack the ships that are most vulnerable to internal damage.

Lesson Number Three: Limit the enemy's ability to return fire.

Some ships are designed to have their main attack strength forward, like the Federation ships. Other races favor broadside attacks with right-side/left-side fields of fire. Deny the enemy his favored field of fire while maximizing that of friendly units. Maneuvering is one way to accomplish this. Approach the enemy from the flank, allowing him the use of only one-half of his weapons. Plot your fleet's movement so that your weapons on the side away from the enemy can be brought to bear with only a turn or two. Do not cross the axis of the enemy ship's flight path; prevent his opposite side weapons from getting in a shot. Stationary fleets can use tactical warp maneuvers to achieve maneuverability, turning to unmask weapons and present new, undamaged shields to the enemy.

Often overlooked are the overlapping fields of fire that exist where firing arcs of adjacent weapons converge. For example, weapons firing left-side and right-side will all fire directly ahead and directly behind the ship. Targets caught in these areas will take double hits from the firing ship. All ships have these areas. Avoid approaching an enemy ship along these "straight-ways" and at the same time look for the opportunity to use the straight-ways of friendly ships.

Lesson Number Four: Maneuver to use all available firepower every turn and to avoid the enemy's weapons.

While only one enemy ship should receive the benefit of the fleet's offensive punch each turn, delivering this damage in one impulse is not the most efficient method of attack. Instead, the attack should be carried out over a series of consecutive impulses. The first attack impulse should occur immediately after the targer's movement, so that the enemy cannot change the shield facing the attackers. The first attack must be strong enough to penetrate the shield and do some internal damage. Follow this initial salvo with a series of shots calculated to cause about ten hits each. What this procedure does is to keep the damage inflicted in the "A" column of the Damage Allocation Chart. The "A" column will produce 28% weapon's hits, 22% power hits, and 6% control hits. Hits in the other columns of the Damage Allocation Chart decrease in the percentage of "good" hits until the very end of the chart is reached. This tactic destroys the enemy's weapons and vital systems at

a faster rate than if all the hits were scored in one single impulse.

Lesson Number Five: Structure an attack to destroy a high rate of vital systems for the amount of hits scored.

Some enemy ships will be too large to destroy or severely damage in one turn. If the shield can be penetrated, it can be crippled. Cripples can still return fire, but they make thier commanders nervous. The commanders will try to keep their damaged shields away from the opposing fleet. This limits their maneuverability. The remaining weapons on the damaged side are not often used for fear of taking more hits on the weakened side. If the damage is critical, the enemy may even withdraw the cripple, which is the next best thing to a kill. The firepower needed to cripple the target is less than that needed to destroy it. In a tight battle, go for crippling the enemy first; then, later, go back and finish off damaged enemy ships after the encounter is decided.

Your own cripples which are damaged beyond the point of being an asset in the battle should be withdrawn. They are too easily blown up, causing collateral damage to near-by ships. If successfully withdrawn, cripples can be repaired for use in a future battle.

Lesson Number Six: Use only enough firepower on a target to prevent its effective use in battle.

Another priority is the early elimination of targets that have the potential to cause problems throughout the length of the battle. Carriers can launch and reload fighters. Scouts can interfere with achieving lock-on. Ships with a large drone-launching capacity can make the opposing fleet use its weapons to fend off wave after wave of drones, while the drone-firer escapes retribution. Any enemy unit which can cause a disproportionate amount of damage or divert the offensive fire of the fleet to the defense should be taken out of the battle early. To illustrate this, take the example of an enemy carrier. Its main offensive battery is its fighter squadron. These fighters launch from the carrier, approach the opposing fleet, launch their drones, return to their carrier, reload drones, launch and repeat the cycle. Each cycle draws off the phasers of the friendly fleet for drone defense and the enemy fleet starships escape the diverted phasers effects that turn. In addition, the carrier has the ability to affect the ECM/ECCM balance in the enemy's favor. The early elimination of the carrier breaks the cycle and the rest of the enemy fleet can be subjected to the firepower that would have been used for drone defense.

Lesson Number Seven: Destroy the enemy's combat potential before he has a chance to use it.

Keep some firepower back for seeking weapons. Drones and plasma torpedoes can alter the tactical situation quickly and drastically. "Wild Weassels" are only part of the answer; they are limited in numbers and can be countered with staggered launches of the seeking weapons. The tactics to neutralize drones and plasma torpedoes are (a) to maintain distance from the enemy launchers and (b) to retain the ability to shoot down these ship-killers. Distance is a particularly good tactic against plasma torpedoes. The warhead dissipates as the distance to the target increases. The dissipated warhead can then be further reduced by phaser fire at close range. Drones are not affected by distance except that, if their travel time can be spread over two turns, they may be taken under fire by the same weapon twice.

In either case, if the enemy has seeking weapons, their effects must be respected. Shield the fleet by reserving phasers, anti-drone defenses, and even regular drones to counter these powerful weapons.

Lesson Number Eight: Protect the fleet from enemy seeking weapons, even at the cost of the fleet's offensive firepower.

(One Free Tricky Tactic: Some players like to launch an entire turn's worth of drones at once from a tight formation. If a ship can be blown up while the drone wave is within four hexes of the unfortunate ship, the collateral damage will usually take out the entire drone wave. This works with fighters and shuttles too, but it only works once.)

Stay at long range in fleet actions. A fleet can depend on massed long range weapons, such as disruptors and photon torpedoes, to do significant damage to the enemy. When fleets get close, phasers become effective, and things start exploding too fast. The damage suffered and inflicted can be regulated by controlling the range. The effectiveness of whole classes of weapons can be limited if you stay outside their effective range; this range can be determined by consulting the CRT of the weapons involved.

If the enemy has drones, his other main weapon will be his phaser battery. By keeping the range at fifteen hexes or more, you make the enemy phasers useless for offensive action. The phasers of the friendly fleet can be used for anit-drone defense, while the main long range weapon (in this case, let's say disruptors), can wreak havoc on the enemy starships. The proper range will depend on the opposing fleet's weapon combinations and the CRTs involved will be the guide in determining that range.

Long range in the initial turns has other advantages. The enemy's intentions can be sized up while your fleet is relatively immune to surprise tactics. All the action will occur to the front of the fleet; flanking maneuvers will require too much power to allow the enemy to reinforce shields, charge weapons, and use ECCM to assure a lock-on. Sudden speed changes by the enemy toward your fleet can be countered on the next turn with the elbow room granted by the extended battle range. If the enemy weakens, you still have the option to close the range; if the battle goes the wrong way the escape route is open.

Lesson Number Nine: Range is a weapon. Use it to advantage.

Fleet actions are usually fought as part of a war. The phrase "Discretion is the better part of valor," is not empty with starships in short supply and replacements hard to come by. When a player finds his fleet in dire straits and his forces badly outnumbered, he should disengage, if the loss of the fleet will not serve a higher strategic purpose. The rate at which opposing sides will lose ships operates in geometric proportion to the differences in their strengths. The weak get weaker at an ever increasing rate while the strong are able to fend off enemy attacks while receiving less and less damage. In a strategic game, the object is to win the war, not waste ships in a battle at bad odds for the glory of it all.

Lesson Number Ten: Retreat when faced with a hopeless situation to save ships for later battles.

For every battle between fleets, several of the above "lessons" can be applied. When deciding which enemy ships to fire at, a gamer is making a subjective choice. This article does not change that; it is intended to help the gamer recognize his options and to choose his proper course. In ship-to-ship battles, the opponents can hammer away at one another turn after turn without inflicting critical damage. In fleet actions, the combined salvo of a fleet is so great that no single ship can stand up to it for more than one or two turns.

In effect, each fleet commander is given a box of eggs and a hammer. The rules of battle are simple. "Smash the other guy's eggs before he smashes yours." Some players do not grasp this basic tenet. Well, the yolk will be on them.

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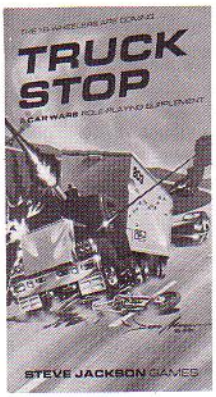

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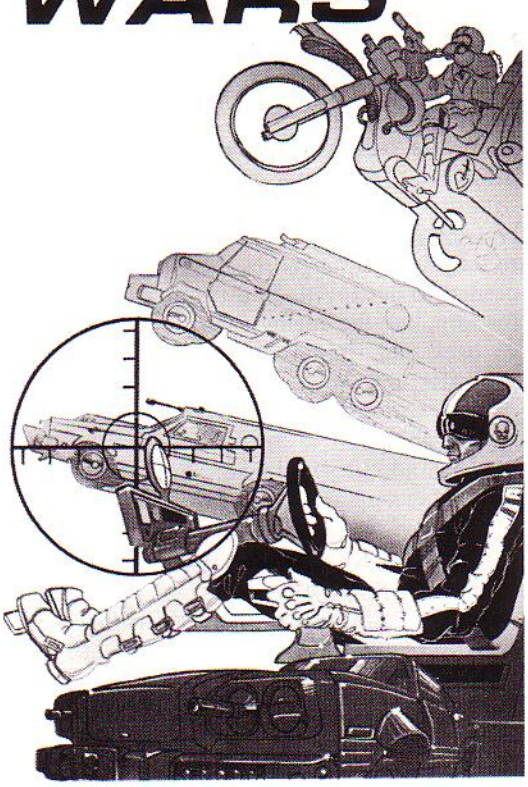

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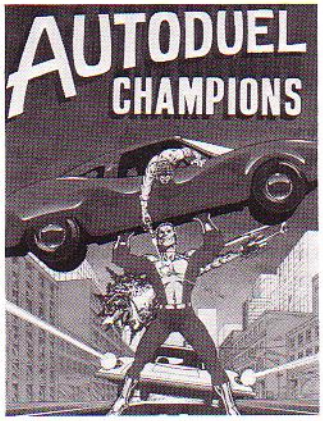

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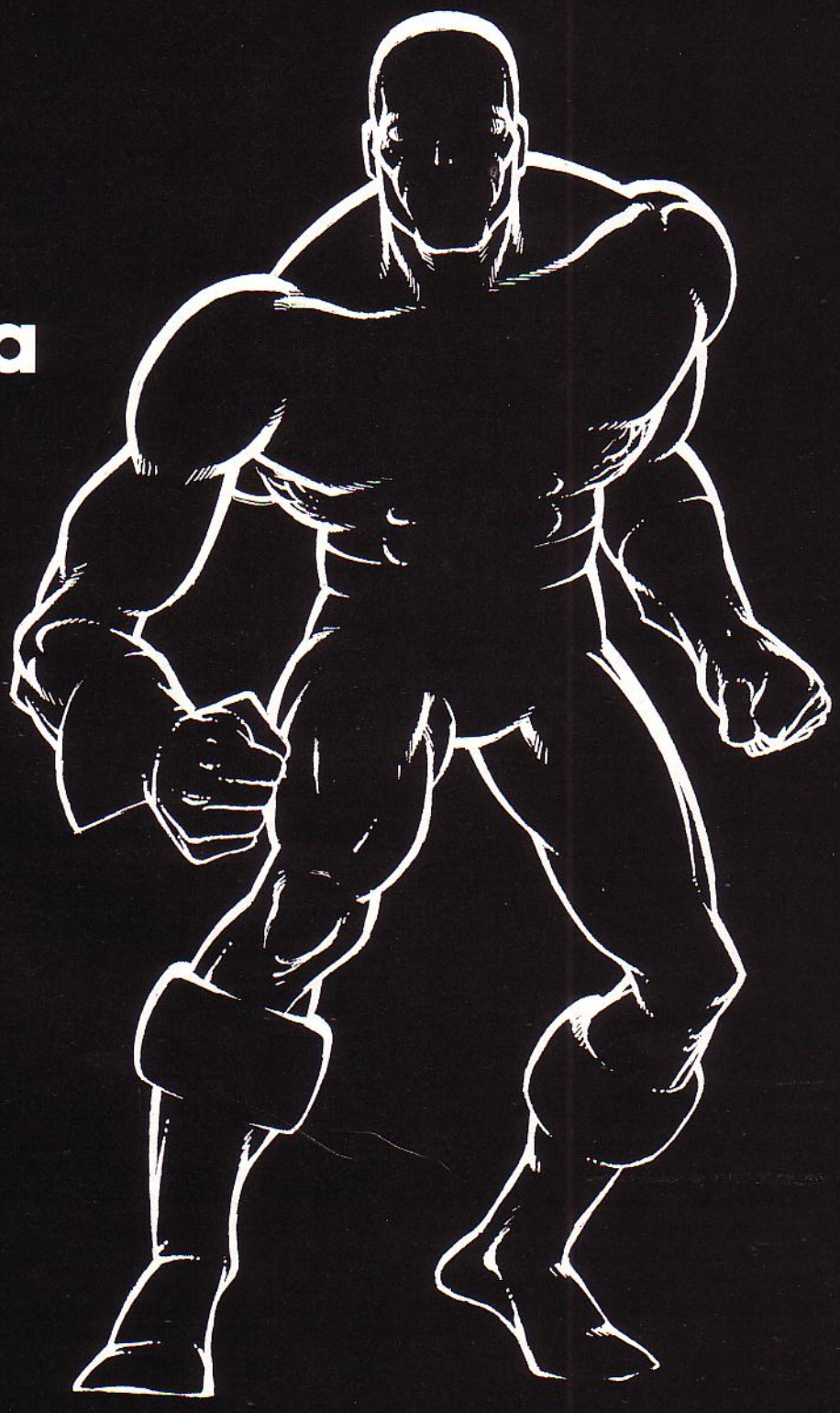
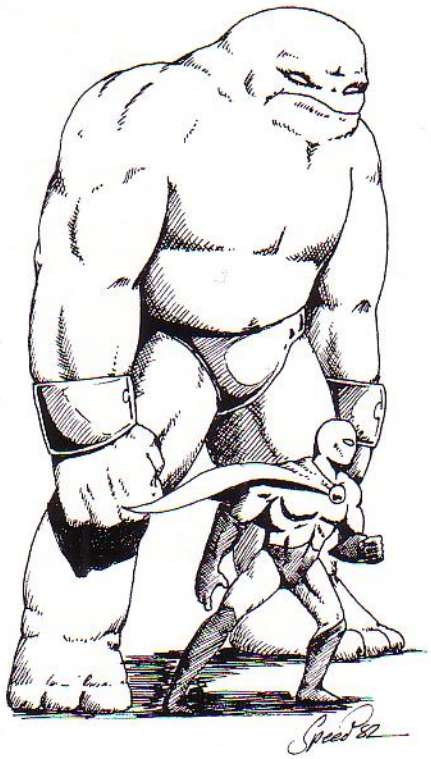
Superheroes in *The Fantasy Trip*



Outline for a Superhero Campaign in *TFT*

by Ronald Pehr



Superheroes in *The Fantasy Trip*

Why Should Wizards and Warriors Have All the Fun?

One of the prime attractions in the roleplaying game ***The Fantasy Trip*** is the rapid yet involving method in which combats are resolved. Unlike many fantasy game rules, which are more complex and lock the player into a realistic but rigid system, ***TFT*** is readily adaptable to different gaming situations. One such is the superhero role-playing game.

In a superhero RPG, players take the roles of costumed crimefighters of the 1980s (or perhaps the 1940s or far future, depending on which comics the players prefer). Superhero background worlds generally resemble reality as we know it – except for the presence of superheroes. In many ways, superhero RPGs are easier for a referee to run than fantasy RPGs. Players don't have to behave as preliterate, pretechnological wizards and warriors. They already understand their background world, since it is essentially their own, and they are not required to kill and loot in order to progress in the game.

This article provides general guidelines for the creation and play of characters in a superhero world, using ***TFT*** rules. It is compatible with ***TFT*** as much as possible. Remember that a superhero world resembles the one we live in; thus, the pseudo-medieval economics of ***TFT***, as excellent as they are, are irrelevant. However, there is no reason heroes and wizards from Cidri cannot operate alongside superheroes, either in a superhero world or a fantasy world. The culture shock alone is worth the price of admission!

I. Types of Characters

Let's begin by identifying the types of characters which populate a superhero world and by describing the common abilities available to such people.

Mundanes are essentially normal people who are not player-characters or superlevel heroes or villains. Mundanes start with 1d6+24 points to allocate, minimum 8 each in IQ, ST and DX. Thus, they start out below the standard of superheroes and even beginning heroes and wizards from ***TFT***. Mundanes may purchase skills from the "normal" skill list presented later in this article, and have the listed common abilities.

Heroes are player-characters generated in the standard ***TFT*** fashion: 32 points allocated to ST, DX, and IQ, minimum of 8 in each. They may purchase skills from the "normal" skill list mentioned, and have the listed common abilities. These are our noncostumed heroes, superspies, private detectives and superheroes' love interests.

And then there are the *superheroes*. Superheroes also start out with 32 points to allot to characteristics. However, instead of having a number of IQ points equal to his IQ to spend on skills, a superhero has a number of Creation Points equal to his current number of attribute points to spend on talents, spells, and superpowers. A beginning superhero, then, will have 32 Creation Points to spend on these things. All these points could go into talents if the character wishes – thus, he is not limited to a number of skills dictated by his IQ, although he cannot buy skills of a higher IQ level than his own IQ. It's the superpowers, though, which distinguish the superhero from the common man – the ability to fly, to throw cars around the block, to project laser beams, to bounce bullets off the chest.

There are several skills which almost everyone growing up in a modern technological culture will have, and which all characters from a superheroic Earth will have. Unlike ***TFT*** Mundane Talents, which are not terribly heroic but require formal training, these common abilities may be presumed to be available to everyone who grows up in the society in which the skills are common. They do not require allocation of IQ points. Common abilities always operate; you don't do any thing special to perform them, and no check is necessary against

IQ, DX, or ST except in a difficult or hazardous situation. The two significant common abilities are Literacy and Driving.

In modern society, Literacy is a common ability; it does not require the allocation of any IQ points. All characters may be presumed to be literate in their own tongue, and in any tongue they speak which uses the same alphabet as their native language.

Driving means driving a standard four-wheeled passenger vehicle. The ability to drive more esoteric vehicles must be purchased as skills.

These two skills operate automatically under normal conditions. A Literacy check – 3d6 vs. IQ – might be necessary if the character is puzzling out a peculiar word (e.g., figuring out that "pachycephalosaur" indicates some sort of thick-headed dinosaur). A Driving check – 3d6 vs. DX – would be necessary to keep control of a car if it has just hit a curb or been sideswiped, 4d6 vs. DX if this occurred on slick streets, or 5d6 vs. DX if it occurred on an ice-covered street during a snowstorm. These die vs. characteristic rolls are made at the referee's determination; since so many varied and different circumstances occur in a superhero game, more so than in a fantasy campaign, the referee's ability to make such determinations about a character's abilities is greater here.

A note on magic: Magic is not commonly available to normal citizens of a modern world. However, player-characters can certainly learn magical spells from ***TFT***, given sufficient rationale and the referee's approval. Note that magical spells are usually not as cost-effective as superpowers, as they tend to drastically decrease characters' ST whereas powers do not. A Superhero learns talents as a Hero and spells as a Wizard; a Hero-level character must choose to be either a Hero or Wizard; Mundanes may not be wizards.

II. Talents

Talents are used by superheroes and heroes in the same manner as any ***TFT*** character uses them, by rolling a number of dice to achieve a number equal to or less than the relevant characteristic governing the talent. For instance, Acrobatics is obviously governed by Dexterity.

Since education is more common in a superhero world than in most fantasy worlds, talents may be increased in ability and utility more easily than in regular ***TFT***. Some ***TFT*** talents – for example, Thief/Master Thief – already have built-in means of achieving higher levels of expertise. Other talents aren't subject to improvement – either you have Sex Appeal or you don't. Those ***TFT*** talents which don't fall into the previous two categories, and many talents from Section IV, may be purchased at higher levels of proficiency.

Consider there to be four levels of proficiency in a talent: Basic, Improved, Advanced, and Expert. Basic allows use of the Talent as described; each additional level of proficiency allows you to subtract one pip from a die-roll being checked against the relevant characteristic, unless otherwise specified for the particular talent. Thus, basic Tactics allows a 5d6 roll vs. IQ to figure out an opponent's moves. With Expert Tactics, the roll is 5d6–3.

Training to each new level of proficiency is done exactly as if acquiring the talent at its basic level: Allot IQ points (Creation Points with Superheroes). The Basic and Improved levels of the skill each require the basic cost of the skill; Advanced requires one point higher, and then Expert requires 2 points higher. Purchasing, for example, Expert Pilot would require 11 IQ points – 2 (Basic) +2 (Improved) +3 (Advanced) +4 (Expert).

Note that common abilities may be bought up in proficiency. Consider them 1-point IQ 7 skills. Thus, Basic Driving is free, Improved Driving costs 1 point, etc.

Any character may attempt to use any talent, even if he doesn't have that talent. A character attempting to use a skill he doesn't possess suffers some restrictions, however.

If the relevant characteristic governing the skill is DX, the character suffers the following modifiers to his DX while using the skill:

-4 for any ***TFT*** talent, unless specified otherwise in ***TFT***
-2 for any 1IQ talent from this article
-4 for any 2IQ talent from this article
-6 for any 3IQ talent for this article

If the relevant characteristic is IQ, roll twice the number of dice usually rolled against IQ.

Any skill which is exercised under difficult conditions – such as lockpicking in total darkness – is at -2 to the relevant characteristic. A skill exercised under hazardous conditions – such as hang gliding with an injured arm – is at -4 to the relevant characteristic.

III. Firearms

Although legally restricted in some areas, firearms are available to most people; even those people who don't normally use them will be vaguely familiar with their use. Note that the ***TFT*** Guns talent applies only to gunpowder weapons common to the fantasy world of the character's origin (blunderbuss, musket, etc.); a fantasy musketeer will not be able to use an Uzi as though he'd been born to it.

A character with no training in firearms but with a passing familiarity in the subject (i.e., a modern character with a modern firearm) – may fire the weapon at -2 DX and may reload it. He may not fix malfunctions. A character with the ***TFT*** Guns talent but no modern firearms talent may fire modern firearms at -1 DX, and may reload them if he is familiar with or has seen the reloading process; he may not fix malfunctions. Likewise, a character with only modern firearms skills may fire antiquated firearms at -1 DX, and may reload them if he's familiar with or has seen the process, and he may not fix malfunctions. A modern character with no firearms skills may fire (at -2 DX) an antiquated firearm, but may not load or fix the weapon. A fantasy character with no firearms skill must make a 4d6 vs. IQ roll to figure out how to use the weapon in the first place (6d6 if he's never seen or heard of such a weapon) and will fire at -4 DX once he's got it figured out.

Each firearms skill is an IQ 7(1) skill. Each skill covers all firearms in a given class. Typical firearms classes include pistols, rifles, submachine guns, and shotguns.

A typical pistol is a .38 caliber six-shot revolver. Most pistols do two dice damage. People with the Pistol talent may elect to use the ***TFT*** "dagger marksmanship" rules when using the pistol. Otherwise, pistols are fired as any ***TFT*** missile weapon, subtracting 1DX for every megahex of range to the target. A pistol, however, may be discharged up to *five* times per combat round. For each additional shot beyond the first, subract DX as if the character were throwing an equivalent number of sha-ken as per ***TFT***. If the shots are directed at different targets, subtract 2DX per each additional target.

A typical rifle is a bolt-action .30-06 which holds 20 rounds. Such a typical

rifle will do three dice damage per hit. Rifles are missile weapons, and may be fired twice per combat round, -2DX if the second shot is against a second target. A bayonet on the end of the rifle makes the weapon the equivalent of a ***TFT*** spear. Military rifles are semi-automatic, hold an average of 30 rounds, and may be fired up to five times per round as a pistol (actually, the genuine rate of fire is considerably higher, but this will keep things a little more balanced).

A typical submachine gun holds 30 rounds per clip. It may fire in single-shot action, doing 3d6 per hit, up to five times per round, or on autofire. Each autofire burst uses five bullets, doing 5d6 when it hits and granting a +3DX to the firer; two such bursts may be fired per round. A burst may be sprayed into three connecting hexes at -3 DX per target; each hit does 3d6 damage.

Shotguns operate as a ***TFT*** blunderbuss, doing four dice damage. They may be fired twice per combat round; the second shot, if it is not at the same target, is at -2DX.

Science fiction guns – hand-lasers, blasters, phasers, etc. – fire once per combat round, and act as ***TFT*** missile weapons. An averate weapon of this type will do five dice damage.

Note: Modern artifacts are not adequately covered either by ***TFT*** or this article. Readers will have to extrapolate from examples or similarities in the ***TFT*** rules (at least until articles expanding the concept of Superheroes in ***TFT*** can be written). For example: A modern flak vest encumbers a character as ***TFT*** chainmail but stops 6 hits; presume that blows and missiles hit the vest on a roll of 5-9 on two dice.

IV. Normal Talents

With Heroes and Mundanes, each of these talents costs a number of IQ points. With Superheroes, each talent costs a number of Creation points. In neither case can a character buy a skill which requires a higher IQ than the character possesses.

IQ 7 Talents

Grenade (1): Any character may throw a grenade a number of hexes equal to his ST, treating it as a thrown weapon. With this skill, characters throw them as missile weapons. Grenades explode with an effect of half a ***TFT*** Petard; they go off at the end of the turn in which they were thrown. This skill does not go through levels of proficiency; the basic skill is all there is.

Bureaucrat (3): A character with this skill will be able to understand official documents, records, etc., when there is some degree of confusion about their contents due to legalese writing styles. This requires a 3d6 vs. IQ roll. A bureaucrat can detect forgeries of official documents on 3d6 vs. IQ (4d6 vs. IQ if done by a Calligrapher, add 1d6 for each level of training of the Calligrapher), and will know if someone is attempting to lie about official regulations just as if the bureaucrat has the Detect Lie talent.

IQ 8 Talents

Blackjack (1): When one character clubs another from behind, without the victim's knowledge and with the attacker knowing the Blackjack skill, the skill allows one additional die of damage to the damage done by the club. When it's used with a blackjack or sap, the skill allows the user to double the normal damage for the weapon, but consider it to be HTH, subdual damage. Having this talent does not grant the user the stealth to be able to sneak up on a victim. There are no additional levels of proficiency with this skill.

Fast Draw (2): Allows a character to ready and fire a firearm in the same round. There are no additional levels of proficiency with this skill.

Parachutist (1): With this skill, the character may use any sort of parachute. When landing, he must roll 2d6 vs. DX to avoid incurring 1d6 damage from the fall. Without this talent, a character may use a parachute but must roll 4d6 vs. DX when landing to avoid 2d6 damage. Without the talent, in addition, a character attempting to use a free-fall parachute must roll 2d6 vs. IQ to successfully open the parachute at all.

Scuba (2); only costs 1 if the character already has the Swimming talent: This skill allows the character to competently operate scuba gear to breathe underwater, and to swim as confidently as though he had the Diving talent when using flippers and facemask. In case of equipment trouble, a 3d6 vs. IQ roll is needed to fix failed equipment, avoid the bends, etc.

Flight Device (2): Each purchase of this skill allows the character to operate one peculiar flight device, such as a jet-pack (which allows one to fly as though he were affected by the ***TFT*** Flight spell), hang glider, or hot-air balloon. As with Driving, difficult circumstances require a 3d6 (or worse) roll vs. DX.

Motorcycle (1): This talent allows use of a motorcycle as a Common Ability of Driving.

Truck (1): This allows operation of a bus, trailer truck, etc. as a Common Ability.

Tracked Vehicle (2); only (1) if also have Truck Talent: This allows operation of a tracked vehicle (bulldozer, tank) as a Common Ability of Driving.

IQ 9 Talents

Pilot (2): Allows driving-type operation of aircraft. Requires a 3d6 vs. IQ roll every round if it is an unfamiliar craft (e.g., a jet plane when the pilot was only trained on prop planes).

Marksmanship (3): A Missile Weapons talent applying specifically to firearms. The actual Missile Weapons still does not apply to firearms. This has only one level of proficiency.

Sharpshooting (2); only (1) if character also has Marksmanship Talent: This allows +4DX (with any specific weapon), provided the shooter fires only once/melee round.

IQ 10 Talents

Sleight of Hand (2): On 3d6 vs. DX, the character can palm small objects, pick pockets, etc. This resembles the Thief skill, but is more theatrical, and substitutes palming of items for lock-picking.

Trance (2): One 3d6 vs. DX, the character can feign death for two minutes. He can also use this as a form of concentration; on 3d6 vs. IQ and given an uninterrupted minute (12 melee rounds), the character may clear his mind to

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enable him to use any knowledge Talent at +1 IQ for the subsequent minute.

Firefighting (2); only (1) if the character also has Climbing Talent. The character, given access to sand, water, chemicals, etc., can extinguish a megahex of fire or less per melee round on 3d6 vs. IQ.

IQ 11 Talents

Gambling (2): The character knows both cheating techniques and odds at games of chance. The skill allows +1 on any sort of dice roll used to determine outcome of a gamble.

Detective (2): The character can use principles of criminology and observation, on 3d6 vs. IQ, to identify suspicious or contraband items, similarities or ambiguities of physical evidence associated with a suspect, etc. It's similar to the ***TFT*** Naturalist Talent, but for use on people.

IQ12 Talents

Gadgets (2); only (1) if the character has Mechanician Talent. This skill allows use of specific weapon or "gadget" which is not commercially available, on 3d6 vs. IQ; it does not confer the ability to fix or modify the object.

Criptography (3): This is the ability to decode secret writings, ciphers, etc. on 3d6 vs. IQ.

Escape Artist (2); Prereq: Sleight of Hand: The character can escape ropes on 3d6 vs. DX. Escaping handcuffs, jail cells etc. requires 5d6 vs. DX+IQ.

IQ 13 Talents

Lawyer (3): When the legality of a character's activities is called into question, or when he is confronted by hostile law enforcement officials, a character with this Talent can avoid the confrontation by recourse to legal knowledge and a convincing speech on 3d6 vs. IQ.

Eidetic Memory (3): On 3d6 vs. IQ, character will remember anything he has read or been told. He must have made the effort to commit the info to memory; it is not automatic. However, the memory is permanent thereafter.

IQ 14 Talents

Interrogation (3): If the character has an uninterrupted 12 turns to question someone who is not inclined to answer a question, and makes a 3d6 vs. IQ roll, he will obtain the answer by techniques of interrogation (subtlety, misdirection, deceit – not torture). The victim may save vs. his own IQ, as per resisting a Control Spell; however, the interrogator may continue the questioning another 12 turns.

Ambush/Assassination (2); Prereq: Silent Movement and Tracking, or Disguise. When striking from ambush, with victim unaware he is under attack, a character with this talent is +4DX and does 2 additional pips of damage with any weapon or U.C. Talent he has.

V. Powers

There are three categories of superpowers: Personal, Ranged, and Enhancement.

The superhero uses *personal* powers when exercising paranormal abilities which do not expel some sort of energy over distance. Such powers include Healing, Flying, and Shapechanging. Each personal power costs six Creation Points to buy; allotment of an additional six "doubles" the power, as explained for each individual power. To use a personal power, a superhero activates the power in the Movement Phase of a combat round, either in lieu of or together with actual movement (depending on the power). To activate the power entails rolling 3d6 vs. the relevant characteristic specified for the power.

Personal powers may be continued indefinitely, without loss of ST, by rolling against the relevant characteristic in the same phase as wizards renew their spells. If the attempt fails, the superhero may then attempt to renew the power in the Movement Phase of the same round. If a power such as Flight "fails", does not activate, it does not mean that the flier suddenly drops like a stone, but rather that he cannot fly in any specific direction until he regains control.

If a referee wishes to limit the capacities of personal powers, he may specify that they can only be used a number of times per day equal to the relevant characteristic.

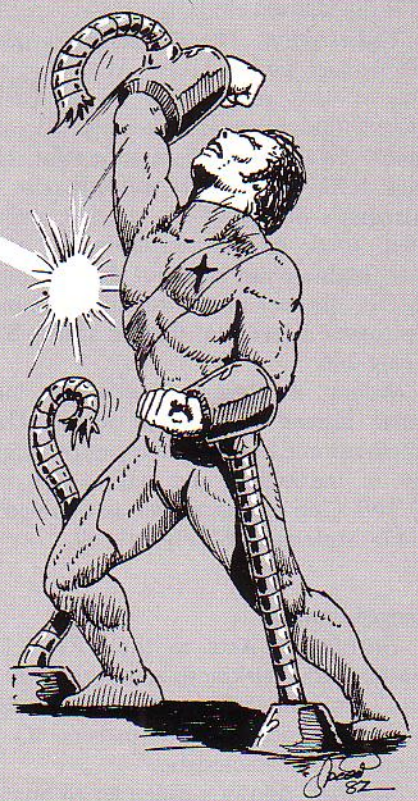
Ranged Powers are those which allow superheroes to hurl energy across distances. They operate similarly to ***TFT*** Missile spells, except that they do not deplete the superheroes' ST. They require a 3d6 roll vs. the relevant characteristic to activate; the roll occurs in the Action Phase, when the character uses the power. If a referee wishes to limit the use of ranged powers, he may require an expenditure of 1 ST each time the Ranged Power is used; the ST would be recovered at the same rate as the Wizard's ST lost in spellcasting, and excessive power use would have the same damaging effects as ST lost through spellcasting. If the activation roll fails the power does not activate this round. Purchase of a Ranged power requires the allotment of eight Creation Points.

Enhancement powers do not need to be activated; they usually multiply the effectiveness of a hero's characteristics. Each enhancement requires the allotment of 12 Creation Points; they may have increased effects through the allotment of additional Creation Points, depending on the individual power.

Personal Powers

Shadow: Allows the superhero to duplicate the ability of the legendary radio show character of that name. If the superhero has one combat round to concentrate (in other words, a round when no one attacks him), and succeeds in his 3d6 roll vs. the relevant characteristic, he can move unseen as if using the ***TFT*** Ivisibility spell. Doubling this power confers actual invisibility, usable against animals or mechanical light sensors as well as people. IQ is the relevant characteristic.

Light: The character can glow, as per a ***TFT*** lantern. Doubling confers the equivalent of a Dazzle spell for each turn the power is activated. ST is the relevant characteristic.



Detection: With this power, a character may, once per turn, say that he is trying to detect a specific object, emotion, person, or other item – such as magic, or the nefarious General Willkie, or radiation, or falsehoods; with a 3d6 roll against the relevant characteristic, IQ, he may detect any examples of his subject within a three-megahex radius area. Doubling allows him to know what the specific example of that subject is – i.e., "two pounds of plutonium" instead of "radiation" or "confusion spell" instead of just "magic."

Force Field: This power allows the character to project a protective force field. If he stands still, he may create a force field covering a megahex (he is at the center of the megahex). The force field repels incoming missiles or any character with a lesser ST than the caster. (Attackers of higher ST smash their way through and the force field drops until reactivated.) Doubling allows the character to cover a mega-megahex area. ST is the relevant characteristic.

Fire: The character can produce the equivalent of a ***TFT*** Fire spell in his own or an adjacent hex. Doubling allows the superhero to create a megahex-sized flame, with one hex adjacent to his own hex (unless he wants to project it on the hex he's in). The caster is immune to his own flame. IQ is the relevant characteristic.

Armor: The character can harden his own body, giving him the equivalent of Stone Flesh (stops 4 hits). Doubling makes it equivalent to Iron Flesh (6 hits). ST is the relevant characteristic.

Regeneration: The character regenerates damage he has taken. At the beginning of each round after he has been injured, the character makes his 3d6 roll against ST; if the roll is successful, he gains 1 ST. This power will not raise a character's ST above his starting, uninjured, total. A character trying to perform regeneration may not do anything else for the rest of the round. Doubling this power means that the roll against ST is only 2d6.

Healing: As Regeneration, above, but usable instead upon other people. The superhero must touch the intended recipient of the healing and make a 3d6 vs. IQ roll (2d6 if the power is doubled).

Fly: Acts as a ***TFT*** Flying spell.

Ranged Powers

Telekinesis: Acts as the ***TFT*** Telekinesis spell. Telekinesis acts at the superhero's "original" ST, not the ST granted by certain enchancement powers. IQ is the relevant characteristic.

Mindfist: Allows a character to punch someone at range; use the character's own attack ST to determine the normal HTH damage, which with use of this power may be applied at range like a missile spell. IQ is the relevant characteristic.

Fire/Lightning/Cold/etc: These are direct-damage powers. Despite their many forms, they basically operate in the same way: Some sort of energy gouts from the superhero and damages what it hits. (The referee may determine any additional effects of the power, such as fire setting objects aflame, cold blasts nullifying fire blasts, radiation blasts not penetrating lead shielding, etc.) Unlike the cost-to-purchase of other Ranged Powers, these powers cost 6 Creation Points per die of damage each blast is supposed to do. ST is the relevant characteristic.

Force: This power pushes open doors, overturns cars, etc., but will not do damage to living entities or characters. It acts in all ways like a fire/lightning/cold/etc. blast, except for the fact that it will not hurt living things. Each die of possible damage costs 4 Creation Points. ST is the relevant characteristic.

Psychic Blast: This power does damage to a person's IQ instead of ST. A character may not die from being psi-blasted, and his IQ never drops *below* 0. Characters who have been psi-blasted act as though they'd been Confused by the spell of the same name; at IQ 6 they take on the reasoning power of proot-waddles, and the referee can enforce typical random and irrational behavior; at IQ 5 the character loses the power of speech and can not distinguish between friend and foe. Each die of damage to a character's IQ per blast costs 12 Creation Points. A character regains 1 IQ per round, at the beginning of the round. IQ, naturally, is the relevant characteristic.

Darkness: This power acts as the ***TFT*** spell of the same name. DX is the relevant characteristic.

Empathy: If the attack roll is successful, the target becomes friendly rather than hostile. This power acts as a Control Person/Animal spell, but with the range of a missile spell. IQ is the relevant characteristic.

Enhancements.

Superstrength: This power doubles the character's ST for purposes of lifting weight and doing HTH damage. For each additional +3 Creation Points, the ST gains an additional multiple (i.e., for the original 12 points, a character gets 2x ST; for an additional 3 points, he has 3x ST; for another 3 points he has 4x ST; and so on).

Invulnerability: This power grants the character a higher resistance to damage. Any incoming attack less than the character's original ST does no damage to the character. Each +3 Creation Points gives the character +2 defensive ST for this purpose only.

Toughness: The character's ST is doubled for purposes of taking damage. If, for instance, he has an original ST of 12 and the Toughness power, he will not be killed until he takes 24 points of damage. Each +3 Creation Points gives another multiple to the effect (i.e. 12 points means 2x ST, 3+ means 3x ST, etc., as with Superstrength).

Speed: The character moves at 2x MA. Each +3 points is +1 MA.

Reflexes: The character is allowed two actions per turn. (This does not mean that he can run 2x MA in a turn, but rather that he could move half or less of his MA and then perform two attack actions.) Each +3 Creation Points adds 2 to DX for purposes of determining when someone acts in a round. If a character's DX is doubled through this means, it means he gets yet another action per round; tripled, another action; and so on.

Intellect: This power doubles the character's IQ for purposes of resisting Control spells and powers and for figuring out such things as codes, unfamiliar devices, etc. Each +3 Creation Points multiplies IQ by one more, as with Superstrength.

Wrapup

Although the Powers listed, particularly the Enhancements, will give superheroes a great deal of combat ability, remember that they *are* superheroes.

Naturally, the powers listed in this article are only a few of the ones which might be worked up for superheroes. This article is not a superhero role-playing game, but rather superhero guidelines for *TFT*.

Note that these rules really do not allow for characters such as DC's Superman, who can juggle battleships, move planets, squeeze coal into diamonds, and annihiliate supervillains before sitting down to breakfast. This was intentional; Superman is a legend, and entertaining to read about, but does not game out very well.

This supplement package is only an outline for a superhero campaign; it would be impractical to publish a full-length superhero ***TFT*** expansion in *SG*. Let us know what you think about this article, and whether or not you'd like to see similar RPG expansions and variants in the future.

I hope these guidelines will allow players to begin superhero activities with ***TFT*** rules, and will provide inspiration for expanding those rules.

Superhero Character Record Sheet

CHARACTER NAME: _____ PLAYER: _____

DESCRIPTION: _____

_____

OTHER NOTES: _____

_____

ST SUPERSTRENGTH:

INVULNERABILITY:

TOUGHNESS:

DX REFLEXES:

IQ INTELLECT:

MA SPEED:

POWERS/SKILLS:

_____

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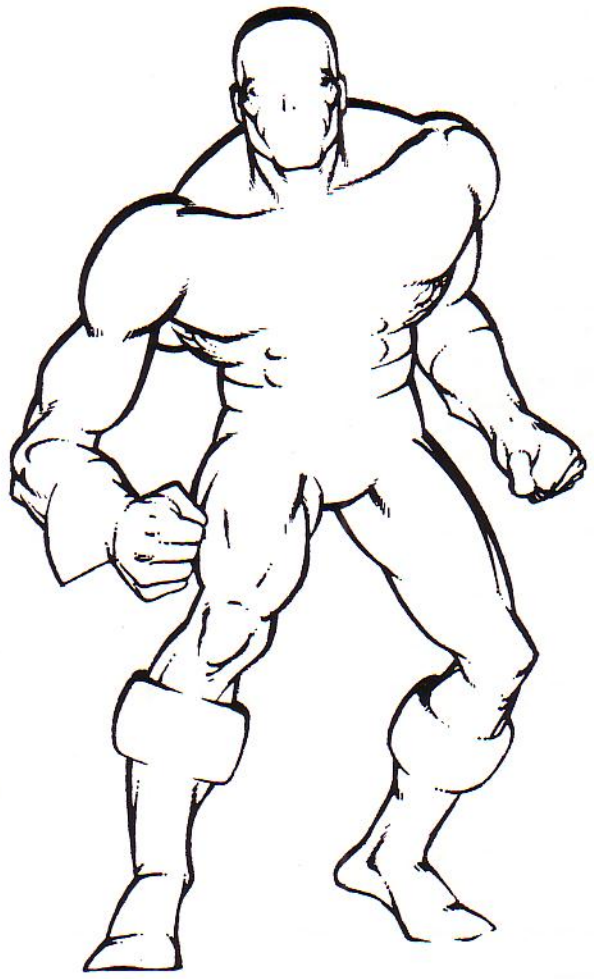

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Counter Intelligence by Aaron Allston

Let me kick off this month's column with a couple of apologies:

Graaf, Graaf, Graaf, Graaf, Graaf: An error slid into W.G. Armintrout's "Star Mail" review in issue 63 – Graaf Simulations was misspelled as Grand Simulations (which is hardly an insult, but still a mistake), and the reference to the sale of Graaf's ***Feudal Lords*** to Flying Buffalo was in error; FBI *will* be offering ***Feudal Lords***, but Graaf is also retaining the game.

Wiseman, Wiseman, Wiseman, Wiseman, Wiseman: In last issue's *Counter Intelligence,* I mentioned Evil Genius (and *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* editor) Loren Wiseman, but spelled his name Weisman. It's a recurrent gaming-industry mistake which Loren and FASA partner Jordan Weisman have been suffering through for some time. (Perhaps the two of you could follow in the footsteps of Trevanian, Fabian, and Cher and dispense with the last names altogether? No?)

The More Things Change

With Origins out of the way (by the time you read this – it's still a month in the future as I write it), we can turn our eyes toward shaping up the magazines at a slightly more relaxed pace. (We can also look toward the next batch of game releases, but that's for Steve to tell you about, not me.)

One important change which will begin affecting the magazine next month involves Pat Mueller. Pat, since she came abord SJ Games a year ago, has had little time to devote to her true love, which is art direction and graphics design. That's all changed, and pretty soon Pat's more creative graphics layouts will replace my own, more stodgy, designs. People may not consciously note the changes, but the magazines will begin to look considerably better and live up to their graphics capacities, which is quite all right with me.

Con Games

Next up on our convention tours include Gen Con, Gateway, and Worldcon. The latter two are interesting because they're on the same weekend, on opposite sides of the U.S.; Steve Jackson and Pat Mueller will be attending Worldcon in Baltimore, while new convention manager Scott Haring and I will be attending Gateway in Anaheim. Collectively, we hope to see a lot of you at one con or the other around Labor Day.

The Great Schism

Reader reaction to the *Fantasy Gamer/ Space Gamer* split has been fairly calm and favorable so far. There are still some complaints floating around from people who like the old mix; but, in general, people seem to be taking the changeover pretty well.

However, don't be lured into thinking that you can sit back and wait for a decent issue of one magazine or the other to fall into your mailbox every month. We're still looking for good and regular contributors. In fact, we lost a couple of contributing editors with the changeover, and are on the lookout for more.

Being a contributing editor to *Space Gamer* and *Fantasy Gamer* simply means producing good, usable copy on a dependable and regular basis for the magazine, usually two to three capsules or an article or featured review per month. The benefits include a place on the magazine masthead, regular correspondence with the editorial office here, and preferential treatment for reviews and article assignments. And, occasionally, a contributing editor achieves enough notoriety in the industry that game publishers begin sending review copies straight to him in addition to sending them to the magazine offices. If you have an interest in writing regularly for our magazines and think you have what it takes, drop me a line; the address is at the front of the magazine.

Fantasy Gamer

In Issue 2 (Oct./Nov. 1983):

Victorian London: Generic game-setting for adventures in the era of Sherlock Holmes, Jack the Ripper, the Order of the Golden Dawn, and more;

DragonQuest Damage Spells;

Power Politics in FRP; and

Featured reviews of **Silverdawn** and **RuneQuest Companion.**

In upcoming months:

A Thing in the Darkness, solo adventure for **Call of Cthulhu**; and

Greg Costikyan's role-playing game of cartoon action.(?)

Space Gamer

In Issue 66 (Nov./Dec. 1983):

A new space conflict game by Steve Jackson; and

Featured Reviews of **Star Trek: The Correspondence Game** and Attactix's **Interstellar Wars.**

In upcoming months:

Jules Verne Adventures (delayed from #65), on gaming Vernian escapades; and

The Island of Entellope, generic adventure for after-the-holocaust RPGs.

Autoduel Quarterly

In Issue 3 (Fall 2033):

Chassis & Crossbow, low-tech autoduelling;

Designer's Notes for **Autoduel Champions**; and

Vehicle Cost Analysis.

In upcoming issues:

Car Wars in shopping malls, for maniacs and other absurdists.

Fire & Movement

In Issue 37 (October 1983):

Featured looks at Victory Games' **The Civil War** and Peoples War Games' **Black Sea * Black Death**; and

Part II of our look at the Solomon Seas.

In upcoming issues:

Analysis of **Johnny Reb**; and

A retrospective of SPI's **Atlantic Wall.**

Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson

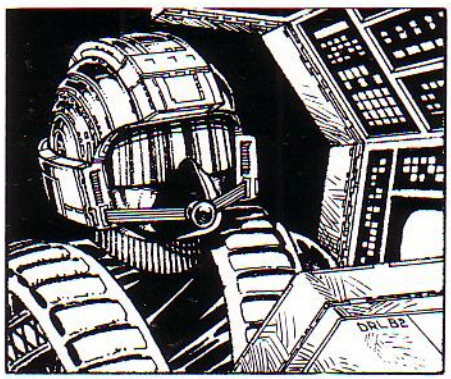
Curse me. Revile me. Put dead bats on my head.

A few issues back I swore solemnly that we would have certain things as Origins releases – including the very-long-awaited ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** supplement. Well, guess what isn't out yet.

The reasons are simple: SJG is suffering from growing pains. It's harder to keep a 30-employee company organized than it is a 10-employee company. And I'm spending more time managing and less time designing. I'm not our only designer. I'm not even our only *in-house* designer. But I'm still the prime source of design and development work – and when I'm too busy to play games, new releases get delayed.

In the long run, what I have to do is find someone who has management talent, understands games and the game business, and is *interested* enough in this business to work for (face it!) a lower salary than he could command from Uncle Sam or the oil companies. When I find that person, I'll go back to full-time game design. In the meantime, things will move more slowly than they did last year.

We did have three "pre-Origins" releases. ***Cardboard Heroes*** Fantasy Set 11 was another Denis Loubet set of "generic" player characters. Fantasy Set 12 was painted by Robert Charrette and comprised 36 assorted Japanese figures. Not much use if you don't want to run an Oriental adventure – invaluable if you do. Finally, ***Car Wars*** Expansion Set 2 included duplicate sets of the ***Car Wars/Truck Stop/Sunday Drivers*** counters, plus a turning key. These are all $3.00 items.



Our actual Origins releases number only two, but they're both major works. The ***Car Wars*** Reference Screen is self-explanatory. It's cardboard, with three 8½" x 11" panels, and includes a copiable set of large-sized vehicle and pedestrian record sheets. It sells for $5.00.

The other release is something of a coup – a combination supplement for both ***Car Wars*** and Hero Games' ***Champions.*** You want autoduelling in the world of superheroes? You want superpowered characters in your ***Car Wars*** campaign? You've got 'em.

As far as I know, ***Autoduel Champions*** is the first supplement ever produced to *seriously* combine two different game systems, from two different publishers, in two different genres . . . and it even works! It's in two sections; you do *not* have to have *both* ***Car Wars*** and ***Champions*** to use ***Autoduel Champions***, because it works with *either*. It includes a large-sized double-sided map and an 11" x 17" bind-in sheet of full-color counters in both ***Car Wars*** and ***Champions*** scales.

I'm really pleased with this booklet; Aaron Allston did a good job on the rules (carefully watched over by the Hero Games folks and myself to insure that everything stayed true to the parent systems) and Denis Loubet did his usual great job on the cover and counters. I know – I'm waxing a bit enthusiastic. Hype, Stevie, hype. But this one really is a lot of fun. Let me know what you think about it.

Probably the Last Word on *The Fantasy Trip*

Last month in ***Fantasy Gamer*** I mentioned that, knuckling under to popular demand, I had contacted Metagaming about a repurchase of the ***TFT*** copyright. I didn't want to see the ***TFT*** system die, and a lot of you didn't, either.

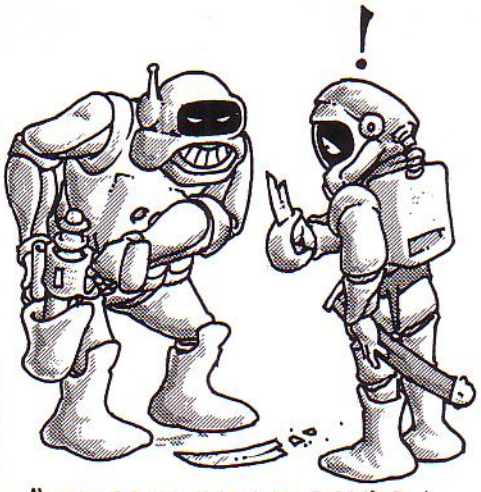
Unfortunately, it appears that their asking price is a lot higher – a *whole* lot higher – than anything I could justify as a reasonable offering price. (And if I *did* have a quarter of a million dollars to spare, I might find something else to spend it on . . .) At this point, I'm afraid republication of ***TFT*** is unlikely.

However, your letters have impelled me to get back to work on a new RPG system – the one I've been mentioning here for the last year or so. In my copious free time, I'll see what I can do. I might be able to get the character generation and basic combat rules ready before too much longer, if all goes well. (Ha!)

Computers Again

Some time ago, we gave up on the idea of producing computer games ourselves, and began semi-covert talks with a number of larger computer companies. Object: license *them* the games. Twice, these talks got as far as contract drafts before breaking down. (In both cases, the company's stock plummeted shortly afterwards. This is only coincidence . . . I think.) Anyway, we are now working on a deal with a new software company: "new" as in "not operating yet," and "software" as in "they don't sell computers, only programs." This one looks pretty good; I'll talk more about it when it's final, but it's just barely possible that you could see ***Car Wars*** and ***Ogre*** for the Apple, Commodore(s), and/or IBM by Christmas.

MURPHY'S RULES

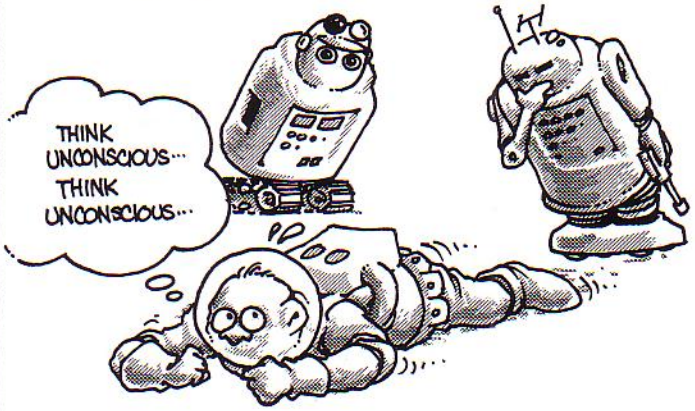


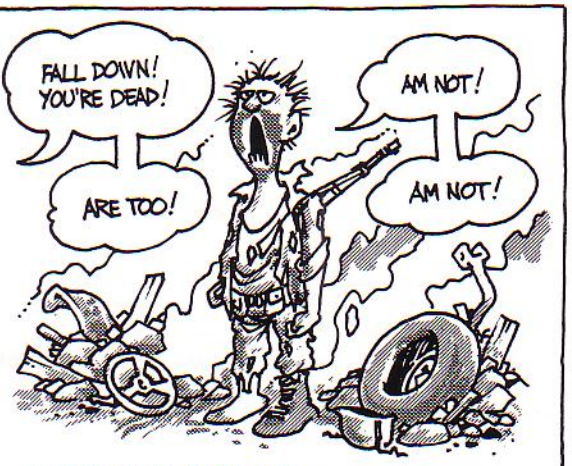
"NOT SO CLUMSY OR RANDOM AS A BLASTER..."

The present-day Marine sword drill consists of little more than a salute. However, in GDW's TRAVELLER, the space marines of the distant future are trained to use their cutlasses in combat... (-Forrest Johnson)

HOW ABOUT IF HE'S DEAD?

In Task Force's BOARDING PARTY, the rules explain for the hard of thinking that a human pretending to be unconscious "may perform no other action while feigning unconsciousness"... (-Steve LaPrade)



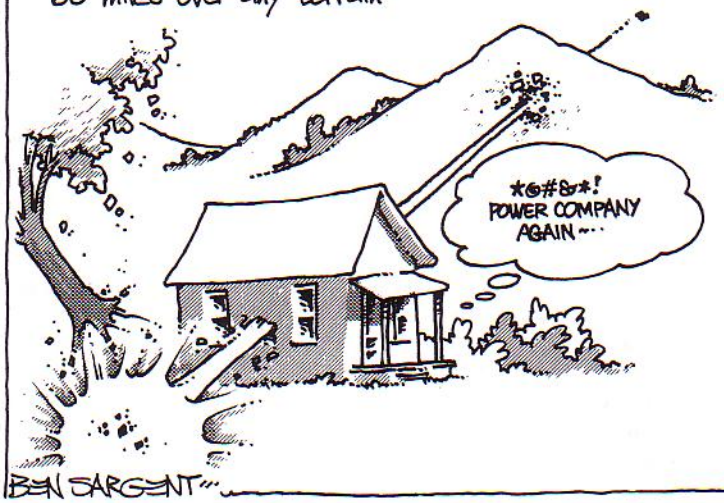


IGNORING ORDERS...

Microcomputer Games' TAC (Tactical Armor Command) tells us in the rulebook that destroying an infantry unit's transport vehicle will kill the crew. Fair enough. In the actual game, though, the infantry unit does not die... (-Chris Smith)

HIGH-TECH TARGETING...

Dwarfstar's GRAV ARMOR features laser-firing units that are not affected by terrain between themselves and their targets... they can fire 60 miles over any terrain...



BEN SARGENT...

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

Ogre/G.E.V.

(1) Is the Roman soldier symbol (on the tanks on page 39 of *The Ogre Book*) a Combine or Paneuropean symbol?

(2) What is the symbol for the other side?

(3) Are the vehicles ever camouflaged?

(4) Are there any decals available for the symbols?

(5) When will *The Ogre Book*, Volume 2, be out?

–Eric Bernai

(1) It is a Paneuropean symbol. (Actually, the crested helmet is Corinthian.) The Ogre is a Combine design, but the Paneuropeans made and used a large number of Mark IIIs and Mark Vs when they took over the factories in the British Isles. The small units are Paneuropean designs. We hope that eventually the small units for all the Combine armor types, as well as Paneuropean cybertanks like the Fencer, will be available in miniature form.

(2) The hourglass symbol on the Ogre on page 1 of ***The Ogre Book*** *is the only other symbol we've ever used, so I hereby declare it to be a Combine symbol – but probably not the only one.*

(3) Yes, the vehicles are often camouflaged. Our official company set is camouflaged in green/gray/tan, and we're painting up a second set in brown/tan/yellow. Several other patterns are, of course, possible. The second ***Ogre Book*** *will probably include a painting guide.*

(4) No, but it's a good idea. I'll think on it.

(5) Volume 2 of ***The Ogre Book*** *will probably be out in late 1984.*

–SJ

Battlesuit

(1) 6.042: Morale: Units that are in Panic remain that way until a 4, 5, or 6 is rolled for their check. A result of Paranoia, Berserk or Fright does not alter the Panic status of the unit. Correct?

(2) 9:00 Unit value: This will require keeping track of the fact that this D3 unit used to be a Command unit. That could get awkward. Maybe you could come up with a slightly easier system that would describe the repair cost as well as the casualties – say, a count of points entering and leaving the battle.

Michael A. Stoodt

(1) Correct.

(2) The theory is that if a unit is capable of leaving the field under its own power, the cost of repair is trivial compared to the cost of replacing a destroyed unit. Even a D4 unit, which is almost helpless on the field, would be far easier to repair than to replace. As to the damaged Command unit – we originally playtested with one each D1 through D4 counter carrying a star to indicate that it was a damaged unit. It didn't seem worth the trouble. In a really large-scale battle, with dozens of units on a side, it might prove important.

–SJ

In section 6.051, "Targeting and Firing," you state "The act of targeting, by itself, does not expose a unit to reaction fire." But, in section 6.055, "Defense against targeting," you say, "The only defense against being targeted is to use reaction fire to shock or damage the targeting unit." Care to explain?

Gladly. A recon drone can move and ***target****. Any other unit, except a bomb drone or a badly damaged suit, can target and fire. In either case, it will be exposed to reaction fire which can "break" the targeting. If a unit targets and does* ***nothing*** *else, it cannot be attacked by reaction fire; this is the import of 6.051. In such a case there is* ***no*** *defense against targeting.*

–SJ

Illuminati

(1) If a group in the power structure is destroyed, are connected groups with no power rating also destroyed?

(2) In a privileged attack, may the defending player spend money to combat the attack, or is the defender, like the other players, forbidden from any defensive support?

Joseph Miranda

(1) If a group is destroyed, all groups it controls and any groups they control (and so on) are neutralized, regardless of whether they have any power or not.

(2) The defending player may always spend money to defend; privilege merely keeps the other players from participating on either side.

–SJ

In ***Illuminati Expansion Set 2***, the Mad Scientists are +4 for direct control, neutralization or destruction of the Orbital Mind Control Lasers. Does this mean that the Mad Scientists are an exception to the rules concerning outgoing control arrows?

Confused

No. Look at the next-to-last paragraph in the first column of the rules, under "Rules for New Cards." The Mad Scientists have "0/2" power – they can aid in an attack but cannot attack themselves – and their +4 bonus counts only when they use their transferable power to aid a direct attack on the Lasers.

–SJ

(1) Can two players leave the room to discuss strategy?

(2) If one player realizes that another player is about to win, can he use his turn to give a third player enough money to win, just to spite the player that would have won otherwise?

(3) If a player accidentally says "attacking" when he means "defending" as he puts in his money, can he change what he meant?

(4) Is it legal for a player to say "if you do that, I'll attack you constantly

in the next game of ***Illuminati*** we play"?

(5) When a player uses a Computer Espionage card, does he count the money in front of everyone, or secretly?

David Platnick

(1) Yes. Of course, the other players may discuss strategy against them, too.

(2) Yes. If the third player can talk somebody into doing that, he's a pretty good diplomat.

(3) Yes, he can correct himself – before the dice are rolled. Otherwise, it sticks.

(4) It's legal. Good replies would be: (a) "Okay, go ahead. I'm calling your bluff."
(b) "Well, if you do that, I'll attack you constantly in the game after that!"
(c) "Fine. I'll never play with you again." (That's the one I would use.)

(5) He can do either; it's his own choice.

–SJ

(1) Are there any ***Expansion Sets 3 and 4*** planned for the future?

(2) What do those cards in ***Expansion Set 1*** mean?

Seth Rodgers

*(1) Right now, we aren't planning any more **Illuminati** expansions. In a couple of years, if we get enough weird ideas, we might change our minds.*

(2) Those cards grant the bearers all the rights and privileges of a member of the Illuminati, whatever those are. Fnord.

–SJ

Can you use the transferable power of one Illuminati group to aid the attack of another Illuminati group and vice versa?

Richard Guay

Not unless you control two Illuminati groups, which is impossible unless you've changed the rules when I wasn't looking.

–SJ

(1) If an attack to destroy is made in a player's power structure, and it is successful, then any group the dead group controlled becomes uncontrolled and gets put into the uncontrolled area. Correct?

(2) When moving a group within your power structure (as an action, not as The Bermuda Triangle) can you adjust which subordinate groups use which control arrows, as when you capture or are given a group with controlled groups (maintaining the same controller/controlled relations, just pointing them in different directions)? For example, in the power structure on page 10 of the rules (the structure in need of reorganization), if the player moves the South American Nazis from the south to the east arrow of the Bavarian Illuminati, can he choose to drop the Fred Birch Society and have Smersh go south from the SAN, or must he drop the Antiwar–Activists, since they will collide with the Cycle Gangs?

(3) Can you adjust groups that are not subordinate to the group being moved, but in the area of the power structure? For example, in the situation above, can the player move the Cycle Gangs to the Bavarian Illuminati's south arrow to get them out of the way of the Antiwar Activists?

(4) In reorganizing subgroups, can you swap two groups? Say, in the same example, (assuming reorganization is legal), can you swap the Fred Birch Society and SMERSH to avoid the conflict between the Cycle Gangs and the Antiwar Activists?

Michael A. Stoodt

(1) Correct.

(2) In a reorganization, each move (even if it is only to another control arrow of the same group) counts as a separate action – so you would have to drop either the Antiwar Activists or the Cycle Gangs, or take another action to move one of them away.

(3) That would be a separate action.

(4) Swapping two groups counts as two actions (see top of page 7).

–SJ

Warpwar

In ***Warpwar***, the combat rules state that "Combat ends in a star hex when: (a) All of one player's ships there have been destroyed, or
(b) All of one player's ships there have successfully retreated off that hex, or
(c) Three consecutive combat rounds occur in which no ships take any damage not absorbed by the Screens. In that case, the player whose turn it is must withdraw all his ships from that star hex to any hex(es) adjacent to that star hex. (*Systemships are assumed picked up by any Warpships you wish.*)"

Picture this: (a) It's player A's turn. He sends a warpship carrying a defensive systemship (no attack capability) to a star hex occupied by an enemy systemship, and successfully retreats off, leaving the two systemships. It is then found that the enemy systemship cannot possibly hit player A's ship. Player A cannot retreat because there is no warpship in that hex, and the same goes for the enemy. Or, (b) It's player A's turn, as above. He drops a defensive systemship on a star hex occupied by an enemy *warpship*, and retreats. It is then found that the warpship also cannot possibly hit the systemship of Player A. Player A cannot retreat (no warpship), and the rules do not in any way oblige the enemy to retreat, even though he has the capability.

Must there be a warpship in a star hex to move a systemship, as in the above situations?

(1) Does combat end, leaving the star unowned?

(2) In (b), does the enemy warpship have to retreat?

Rick Hogen

In the example above, obviously the Systemship cannot retreat off the hex. It would be unfair to require the non-moving Warpships to move. Therefore, a playable solution would be to leave the Systemship in place. The ownership of the planet is not affected – i.e., whoever owned that planet before the combat is still the owner.

–SJ

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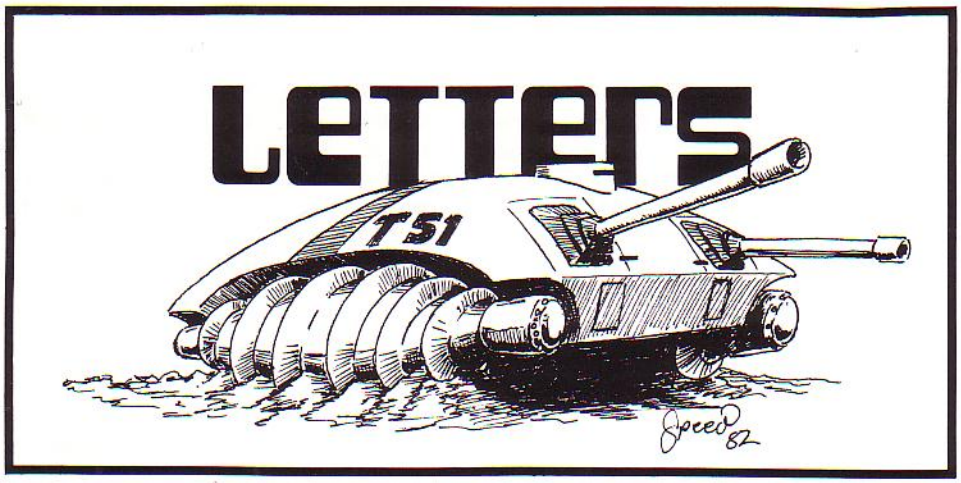

I must disagree with Robert Hayes' letter in SG 63 regarding the publishing of games in SG. I've very much enjoyed ***Necromancer, Battlesuit,*** and ***Globbo***, much more so than any of the games that appeared in *S&T/Ares*. My sole disappointment with any of the games so far has been the lack of vehicles in ***Battlesuit***. A good game adds to the magazine, not detracts from it.

Robert's comment about your ability to create regularly published games is so ludicrous that I won't even bother commenting on it.

SG 63 had some very good articles. I was especially pleased with W.G. Armintrout's "Star Mail"; as an avid PBMer I'm always interested in hearing about another game. ***The Haunting of Harkwood*** was well done, especially the jousting rules, though the whole thing had a rather morbid air to it.

The game survey results were very interesting indeed. Naturally, SG and Steve Jackson Games rated very high (and deservedly so, in my opinion). What astonished me was the extremely poor ratings assigned to ECI's ***Silverdawn*** and ***Star Trek*** PBM games. I've been playing ***Silverdawn*** for a good year now, and ***Star Trek*** ever since it came out, and I was amazed to see that either game was given the rating indicated. I know of no one who has actually played the games who would give either any rating less than "7." As a matter of fact, all the PBM games were rated rather low. I strongly suspect that the survey was thrown off here by people responding who've never played a PBM game.

When can we expect another superhero *Cardboard Heroes* set? And what about the eagerly-awaited Naked Elf Women set?

Steve Woodcock
Sullivan, MO

Thanks for the kind words.

You can look for vehicles in the ***Battlesuit Expansion Set*** *Steve is currently working on; the release date for that now looks like winter or HIA.*

Another superhero Cardboard Heroes *set is a definite possibility. However, the Naked Elf Women set seems less and less likely; in all the months Denis Loubet has been interviewing models, he hasn't committed one to paper yet . . .*

–AA

Just wrote to congratulate you on SG 62 and ADQ 1. Both are excellent and SG 62 has some great art, the cover.

Your ***Globbo*** game is hilarious, thanks to Allen Varney; there'd probably be a good market for ***Globbo*** if you would let all the baby-sitters in on it. *Autoduel Quarterly* has some great stuff like Uncle Albert's (keep it going) and advertisements.

Dirk Tischer
Birmingham, MI

I am not happy about the split SG is undergoing. I was very happy with the fantasy/SF mix, and I am distressed by this "specialization" approach. For one thing, I don't want to subscribe to two magazines; that can tend to get expensive – if they go monthly. If they don't go monthly, things won't be tight financially, but they'll be annoying in another way. I like to read articles on both fantasy and SF *every* month. Your alternating magazine method would limit me to one or the other each month.

I've been a SG subscriber for a long time now, and I think it is a shame you are taking this course now – the magazine has never been better. I'm not wishing failure on your plan, but if things

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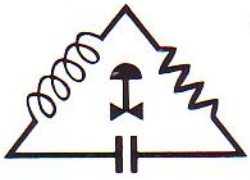

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Kevin S. Cook
Brooklyn, NY

The cover illo of SG 62 was, ah, puzzling. I was looking forward to a naked elf maiden . . .

The *V&V* review was good. Note that an errata sheet is now available for the game.

Globbo was cute. Perhaps Mr. Varney can come up with a high-school version for use in ***Alma Mater*** games.

The ***Illuminati*** expansions look good – from what I've seen of them. The things are so *expensive*! I'm sure that both could have been packaged in a less expensive manner or combined in one Pocket Box for a little more than $6.00. As things stand, I'm passing on both sets (thanks for using the Orbital Mind Control Satellites, by the way . . . the public should know of these menaces!).

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

A letter by Nicholas Cowell was published in SG 62 which purported to make certain clarifications and corrections to my article "Gaming Up Over" (SG 57). It seems that not only were some of my assertions incorrect, but laughably so. I have decided to have the last laugh and shall take the points as he raises them.

1. In an article designed to have a brief but succinct description of the Australian gaming scene to a substantially American readership, I did not think it appropriate to mention small circulation club magazines. I did describe the sole existing national gaming magazine – *Breakout*.

2. It will come as no surprise to anyone who knows the gaming scene, either in Australia or the US, that club membership accounts for only a small fraction of gamers. ARPL represents 700 gamers. *Breakout* has a circulation of 2,000 and the total number of gamers is many times that. My information concerning the relative popularity of FRP systems comes from Jedko Games, by far the largest Australian distributor. It is simply a fact that ***T&T*** is the second-highest selling FRP system behind ***D&D***. ***Traveller***, a SFRPG, does sell more than ***T&T***. ***RuneQuest*** and others are nowhere. That very few club gamers play ***T&T*** does not surprise me in the least, but they are in a minority.

3. When I wrote of PBM I meant commercially-moderated PBM. This is what the readers of SG generally understand by the term. The ***Cluster*** campaign is a non-commercial, cooperative ***Traveller***-based campaign which is played by mail. Both of the commercial PBM companies that I mentioned have since ceased to operate.

I suggest that Mr. Cowell consider the context and wider perspective before he next rushes into print. It would also help if he were to check his facts.

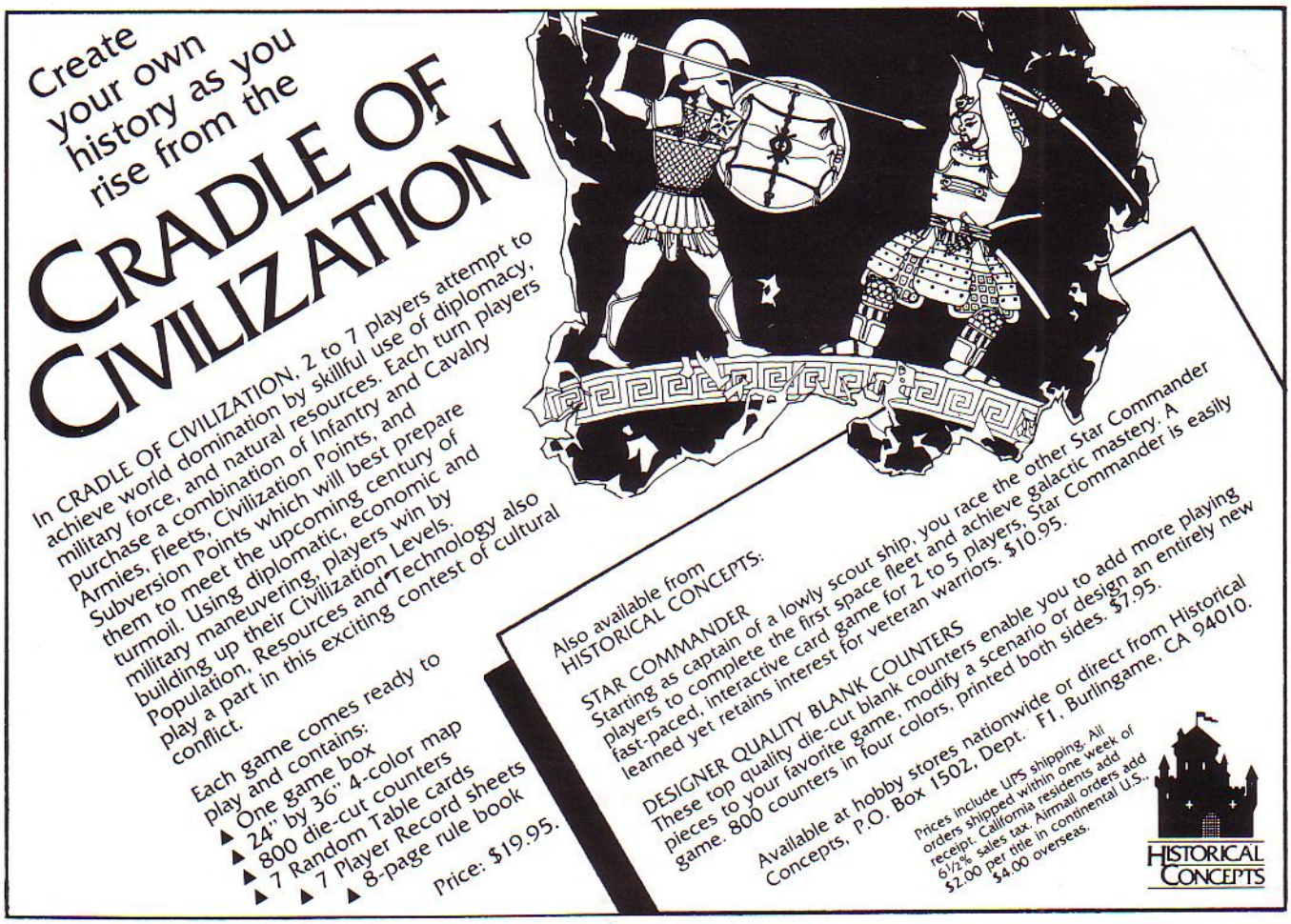
Dr. A.D. Young
Mt Eliza, Australia

Truck Stop is fabulous. The ***Illuminati*** expansion sets, though a bit overpriced, are great. I lost my button, though. ***The Haunting of Harkwood*** was neat, much better than movie reviews. More gameable too. I like *Autoduel Quarterly*. I like *Cardboard Heroes* on the bind-in card. The art has improved. The interior color is nice, but not necessary. Tell Steve Jackson to buy ***TFT***. A SJ Games edition would be great.

Thomas Cornwell
Bluefield, WV

Actually, everyone *is telling Steve to buy* ***TFT****, except for the folks who are familiar with the price being asked for the game. It doesn't look likely.*

–AA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Capsule Reviews

Space Gamer reviews science fiction boardgames, role-playing games, computer games, play-by-mail games, and game supplements. We will review any SF game if the publisher sends us a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine. For more information on the reviews process, see "Writing Reviews for *Space Gamer* further on in this section.

Games and game items for which *Space Gamer* has assigned or received reviews include (The) ***Alien, Alien Armada, Combots, Espionage, FORCE, Galac-tac, Galactic Adventures, Illuminati, Illuminati Expansion Sets 1 and 2, Interstellar Wars, Mercenaries Spies & Private Eyes, San Succi, Shuttle Intercept, Silo 14,*** *Soldiers of Fortune, Starline: 2200 miniatures,* ***Star Trek (PBM),*** Castle's *Super Heroes,* and ***Warboid World.***

Games and game items for which *Space Gamer* is seeking reviews include *Autoduel Quarterly,* ***Cassiopeian Empire, Cosmic Balance II – The Strategic Game, Famine in Far-Go, Fasolt in Peril, Forms and Charts, Gamma World*** (revised), ***Gamelord, High Ranger Guard, Knight Hawks, Lee's Guide to Interstellar Adventure, M.I.S.S.I.O.N., Operation: Fastpass, Operation Peregrine, Race in Space, Spectre, Star Explorer, Star Fleet Battle Manual*** (boxed), ***Star Sector Atlas 2, Star Sentry,*** Castle's *Survival Force,* ***Traveller Starter Edition, The Undersea Environment, Volturnus/Planet of Mystery, Voyager 1,*** and ***Witness for the Defense.***

SUPPLEMENTS

ADVENTURE CLASS SHIPS, VOL. II (FASA): $12.50. Designed by J. Andrew Keith, with Robert Caswell, William H. Keith, Jr., and Jordan Weisman. Five 17" x 22" double-sided deck plan sheets, two 6" x 9" 16-page booklets, 112 die-cut counters, boxed. Published 1982.

This is the latest in FASA's series of 15 mm-scale ship plans for use with ***Traveller.*** Plans are included for ten major ships and several small craft (many of which are shown in interior docking position inside their mother vessels). Along with plans for the standard ***Traveller*** Type Y Yacht, Type M Subsidized Liner, Type T Patrol Ship and a new design for the Type A Free Trader are a Zhodani Far Trader, an Aslan Combat Scout, a Medical Scout, a Solomani Patrol Frigate, the *Explorer*-class 800-ton Survey Cruiser featured in ***Fate of the Sky Raiders,*** and a 500-ton Orbital Facility. Book 1 of the two booklets provides ***High Guard*** stats for each vessel, along with stats for the commercial shuttle depicted in the plans, and gives brief descriptions of the ships' appearance, layouts and usages. Book 2 provides background data on the plans, including notes on interior details, fittings and conditions plus information on both Solomani and Aslan military vessels in general, and a series of encounter tables for integrating the ships in this package into your ***Traveller*** campaign. Counters depict crew members and passengers for ***Snapshot*** or ***Azhanti High Lightning*** play, and ship silhouettes for ***Mayday.***

Most of the vessels presented in ACS II could provoke some interesting situations for ***Traveller***; I find the Orbital Facility and the Survey Cruiser of special note, due to the many uses to which the first can be put and the scientific emphasis of the latter. The Medical scout is another long-missing noncombat ship that could prove useful in a campaign. As usual, FASA's attention to detail on deck plans highlight all those in this package.

Aside from a few typos, there are a couple of problems in this set. The decks aren't labeled on a few of the plans. The casino on the Subsidized Liner seems awfully small, and I can't see how the ATV can get from its compartment to the ship's boat on the Yacht, for example. Also, the colors on some of the counters aren't in agreement with the key provided in the booklet. None of these problems are insurmountable, though.

If you're not totally burned out on ship plans, you might find ADVENTURE CLASS SHIPS, VOL. II to have much of interest for your ***Traveller*** campaign or for variety in playing ***Snapshot*** or ***Azhanti,*** provided the $12.50 price isn't a bit steep in these lean times. You certainly won't find any better than these.

–William A. Barton

FORCE (FGU); $5.00. Designed by Thomas Dowd. One 8½" x 11" 24-page book. For GM and about four players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

A deadly viral culture and a nuclear bomb have been stolen from the army by a supervillain group known as the The Force, and unless they are paid $500 million in diamonds as ransom, the bomb will be detonated somewhere in the U.S., the blast spreading the virus over hundreds of square miles. This is the situation in FORCE, FGU's latest ***Villains and Vigilantes*** adventure. The superheroes must find and stop the Force before it can wreak biological havoc on the U.S. FORCE contains all the data needed by a GM to referee the players through

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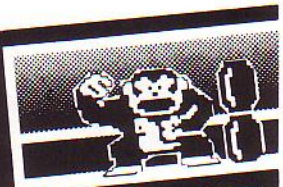

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their search for and subsequent battles with The Force. Maps and descriptions for The Forces's bases on St. Sebastian Island and in Kansas include two underground bases, a religious commune, tram stations, a hydrofoil dock and deck plans for the hydrofoil and a rocket plane. The supervillain NPCs of The Force are all set down in *V&V* stats with descriptions of their origins, personalities, and probable fighting tactics, so that the GM should have no problem playing them to the hilt.

FORCE should present an interesting challenge to the players as they race against time to find and stop the villains. Especially nice are the detailed descriptions of the boat, the rocket plane and the trams, along with the detailed bases, any of which could be pulled from this adventure and used however a GM sees fit. Also handy is the list of goons at the end, along with stats and lists of weapons they will usually be carrying, so that the GM doesn't have to make these up beforehand.

There are really no guidelines on what to do if The Force sets off their nuke/bio device. A map of the affected area is included, along with notes on the disease's effects and what powers may provide limited immunity to it, but if the heroes don't manage to deactivate the bomb in time, there seems to be little way to stop the disaster (unless the players and/or GM can think up a good one on their own).

Still, FORCE can provide some exciting superhero play if handled correctly, either for *V&V* or as a source of ideas for other superhero systems available.

– William A. Barton

NOMADS OF THE WORLD OCEAN, *Traveller* Adventure 9 (GDW); $4.98. Designed by J. Andrew Keith and William H. Keith, Jr. One 6" x 9" 48-page booklet. For referee and eight players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Nomads of the World Ocean is GDW's latest adventure for ***Traveller***. It concerns an investigation by a group of adventurers into the alleged illegal slaughter by Seaharvester LIC, a subsidiary of one of ***Traveller***'s omnipotent megacorporations, of the Daghadasi, the huge sea beasts of the waterworld Bellerophon. The creatures, it seems, are the only source of a priceless chemical. The investigation, however, is quite likely to lead to the characters assisting the Nomads of the planet in an attack on the corporation ships they believe guilty of the slaughter. The booklet includes detailed information on the planet Bellerophon, its societies and its dominant life forms; on the Nomads, their politics and the nature of their aquatic hunts; and (of course), on the evil megacorporation and its minions. Data is provided on the Nomads' hunterfoil vessels (combination hydrofoils/submersibles) and the defensive capabilities of the huge factory ships of the villains of Seaharvester for the inevitable clash. Pregenerated player-characters and NPCs, a map of the planet and several illustrations by Bill Keith – more than usual in a GDW adventure – fill out the package.

The most interesting aspect of *Nomads* is Bellerophon itself – the world and its culture. Again the Keiths prove themselves to be among the best of the world builders around (certainly they're the best GDW has). In fact, the adventure itself almost seems little more than an excuse for the excellently crafted background. The hunterfoils are notable as the first official examples of armed watercraft to appear for ***Traveller*** – one of many unfortunate omissions in the game. Within the limitations of the ***Traveller*** system itself, one could do much with the info presented here on possible life and survival on a waterworld.

Nomads, unfortunately, has problems. The adventure outline seems to be little more than a reworking of the theme used in the Keiths' FASA adventure, ***Uraqyad'n of the Seven Pillars***, transferred from a desert environment to a waterworld and with the corporation replacing the Zhodani-backed invaders. This probably isn't the fault of the Keiths, really, but rather of the limitations GDW seems to put on what can and cannot be a ***Traveller*** adventure. The blandness of theme can most likely be attributed to John Harshman's development, as little of this "rehashed" feeling plagues any of the adventures the Keiths did for FASA. (One wonders of what the Keiths would really be capable if not straightjacketed by GDW's narrow restrictions.) Another problem stems from a little too much background: Native words peppered throughout the text make it necessary to constantly refer to a 60-word glossary in the back. It's a good idea for a novel, but doesn't work well in a game setting, where proper development and/or blind playtesting would have shown. (With this type of expertise, though, the Keiths probably *should* be writing SF novels instead of wasting their extensive talents on ***Traveller***.)

Overall, if you don't mind the duplication of theme from the earlier work, *Nomads* could be a worthwhile buy if you're interested in a waterworld and don't have the time or inclination to work it out on your own, or are simply interested in the possibilities of sea

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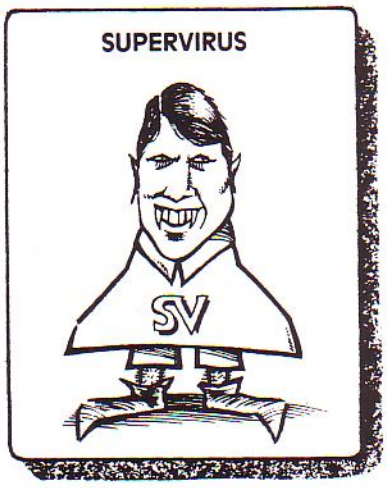

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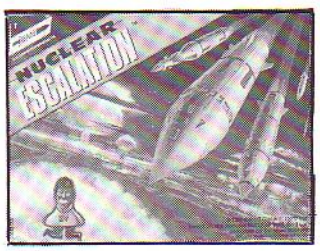

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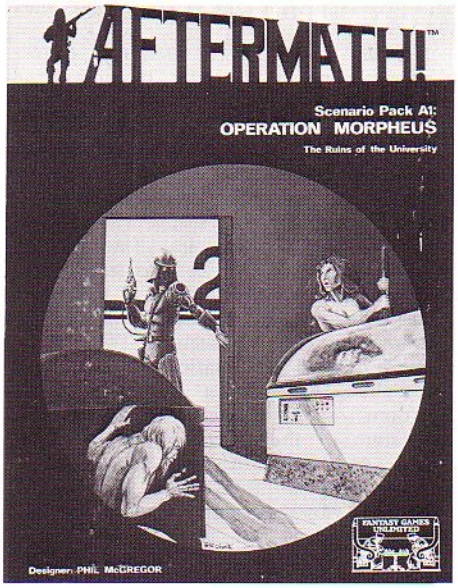
–William A. Barton



OPERATION MORPHEUS (FGU): $9.00. Designed by Phil McGregor. One 8½"x 11" 56-page book. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

Operation Morpheus, the second scenario pack for *Aftermath*, is now available. MORPHEUS not only contains complete background information for an entire *Aftermath* campaign setting, but holds additional supplemental materials of use with the game system as well. The scenario revolves around a group of player-characters who come out of cybernetic hybernation some 100-odd years after the biological/nuclear holocaust that ended civilization (shades of *The Morrow Project*!). The characters had been frozen as part of an experiment at the University of Sydney in Austrailia (where the campaign is set, though it would be little work to relocate it). When the Scourge of God plague decimated much of the world's population and precipated a nuclear exchange between the superpowers, Australia decided to leave the "corpsicles" in storage in an effort to preserve humanity for the future. Thus player-characters enter the game with only their skills and whatever they can salvage from the University labs. The scenario package contains complete plans of the University, along with exhaustive descriptions and maps of all the existing buildings, their defenses, what may be found in them and how they may be entered. It also includes *Aftermath* statistics on the robots and warbots defending the complex, plus stats on new weapons and vehicles for the game system and rules on how to use them.

Operation Morpheus is an excellently conceived and executed product. Its detail is almost overwhelming. An *Aftermath* GM should have no problems mining the book for ideas that could yield an extended campaign. The new weapons are quite nice, especially the ultramodern lasers and gauss weapons, as are the vehicles – the various helicopters and aircraft in particular. These and the accompanying rules expansions should be enough to make most *Aftermath* GMs want the package, regardless of whether or not they run the scenario as is.

The only really jarring note I found in *Morpheus* was the addition of the vampires (yes, *vampires*). While they are handled well and an adequate scientific explanation given for them, they still seem a bit out of place. The player-characters will have enough problems dealing with the warbots, etc., without having to worry about getting another pain in the neck. It will also be difficult to fully utilize this excellent product without running a complete new campaign or making extensive changes in the rationale behind it. And the conversion-value of the piece to other after-the-holocaust systems is low, much lower than the first *Aftermath* scenario pack, so it has less crossover value to *Morrow* players than it might.

Still, if you're an *Aftermath* enthusiast, you won't want to pass this one up. It is an outstanding addition to that game system.

– William A. Barton

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COMPUTER GAMES

SERPENTINE (Broderbund Software Inc., 1938 Fourth St. San Rafael, CA 94901); $34.95. 48K disk for Apple; playing time variable. Published 1982.

Serpentine is one of the best arcade-type games available from any software company. Its graphics, animation, and playability are extremely close to arcade quality, and it is simple enough for beginners, yet challenging enough for an expert arcade buff.

The situation is set in the far future when serpents have taken over the earth. They are divided into two types, good and evil. You, having managed to tame a few of the good ones, ride off on your reptilian mount to rid the world of the evil ones.

The screen displays the top view of an ancient city, somewhat reminiscent of the *Pac-*

Man type mazes. Both types of serpents manuever about the screen; the player may use either joystick or keyboard. The object is to nibble segments off the enemy serpent, then to eat it head on when it is smaller than you. Each reptile periodically lays eggs which cause the opposing serpent to gain a segment.

Serpentine is unquestionably a game worth owning, and if there are any weaknesses or bugs, I have yet to find them. I definitely recommend this game, as it promises to provide fun and excitement for a very long time.

–Karl Westerholm

PLAY-BY-MAIL

ALIEN CONFLICT (Schubel & Son); $3.50/turn, $3.50/set-up. Designed by Peter Dorman. 48-page, 5½" x 8½" rulebook. Computer-moderated play-by-mail. Two players or two teams per combat; turn-around time 1½ weeks. Begun 1983.

The Kastron Sandpeople have a vicious habit: they like to snatch aliens from their home worlds and make them fight in an arena. In ***Alien Conflict***, you become a Kastron and search for (well, design) an alien champion.

The alien design rules are a modified version of those in ***StarMaster***: players design the race's home world (terrain, gravity, atmosphere, and so on), ideology, and biology (skeletal system, limbs and manipulators, reproduction, senses, type or powers of mind, and such exotics as electric-arc spines and ball bearings).

Once the alien has been set-up, players submit a turnsheet specifying their alien's tactics from fleeing to desperately attacking. Four tactics are chosen for each pair of rounds, to be used if your alien is winning, about even, losing, or in desperate straits. Players also vote for weapons and armor, and may bribe the Kastron authorities to get some. They may also bet on the fight (not real money – "Economic Units" from ***StarMaster***).

Schubel & Son pairs two aliens in combat and the computer moderates the combat for ten rounds. Combat is to the death, but can end in a tie if no one is dead after ten rounds; aliens can be reused even though dead since each represents a representation of an entire race. Points are granted for each combat and Schubel & Son prints the standings. Team combats can also be arranged.

Designing an alien is a great deal of fun, while filling the turnsheet is marvelously easy. The rulebook is well-written (and, finally, a *glossary* to explain vital terms is included! Now, add one to ***Arena Combat*** and ***Catacombs of Chaos***, please). There are no deadlines (in fact, you don't even have to wait for one result to reach you before sending in a new turnsheet). The program places combat in such locales as a hydrogen glacier at -337 degrees F, randomly provides such weapons as ice clubs and charged-particle sabres, and rushes medical personnel in between rounds while fights break out in the stands. Print-outs can be as long as five feet.

I have quibbles: In four fights I met the same opponent twice: betting is open only to ***StarMaster*** players (no one else has EU's!); the ranking system gives points even for losing a fight (so long-time players stay in the top rankings); and Schubel's "easy to read full text format" could use help on its right-hand margin. The program too can be criticized – a face mask is no good to a creature that breathes through its skin, and some hit locations seem improbable (my alien has taken hits on its underside ball bearing and on its short claw – arm, but not yet its ten-yard goring arm . . .).

Designing an alien is challenging, while actual play is beer-and-pretzels fun. Except for the high price, I can recommend ***Alien Conflict*** to everyone.

–W.G. Armintrout

MINIATURES

DINOSAURS (Pinnacle Products); $11. Boxed set with nine 15mm figures, eight colors of water-based paint, two plastic trays, brush, and instructions. Released 1982.

Considering the lasting popularity of dinosaurs in the public imagination, it's surprising that more dinosaur models aren't available. In fact, the standard by which little dinos are judged, is still (as it was 30 years ago), the line of hard rubber models produced by the American Museum of Natural History. Grenadier's (Pinnacle Products is their toy division) offering is welcome indeed.

The set contains nine castings in a balanced, if somewhat predictable mix. Old favorites – Stegosaurus, Triceratops, Ankylosaurus, and T. Rex – are represented, along with a couple of sail-back dinos, Parasaurolophus (a large bipedal plant eater), a nest of eggs and a rather rare model – Protoceratops. Sculpting is very well done and the detailing is exceptional – so much so that several of the little lizards (Stegosaurus in particular) rate the adjective – "definitive." These models by themselves are worth the cost, so the paints, painting tray, and full color

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Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long and contain:

(1) Basic information. Present these facts, in this order: NAME OF GAME (Publisher); price. Designer. (If applicable: "Supplement to _____," "Companion to _____," or similar note.) Format: list of components, with sizes of maps and rulebooks, number of counters, etc. Number of players; playing time. Publication date.

(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

(3) Strong points. Discuss what is good about the game; in every game, there *is* something worthwhile. "Fun" is a useless adjective. Be specific.

(4) Weak points. Every game has its problems, too. If the only faults you can find are minor ones, say so. If the game is fatally flawed, come right out and SAY SO. If you can phrase your criticisms as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation. Your overall opinion of the game. Who should and should not buy it, and why. Is the game worth its price?

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name *will* be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him decide whether he wants to buy that game. Keep that in mind when you write. This is a short review, *not* a complete analysis. For those who want to write longer reviews, each issue will have one or two –

Featured Reviews

These will be game reviews 1,000 to 2,000 words long. They should contain *all the above information*, plus whatever else the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. A featured review may cover either a new game or one that has been on the market for some time. If we have not already printed a capsule review, write one and submit it at the same time.

painting guide (despite a few errors in matching instructions to photo) are a nice bonus.

There's very little negative to say. The paint brush is worthless, but that's no big deal. My only real complaint is with the bases on five of the dinosaurs. They're rather large, unnecessary (the models could easily have been designed to stand without them), and they do detract considerably from the overall appearance of the figures.

For the gamer this set offers a lot of possibilities; a ***Traveller*** adventure on a prehistoric planet comes instantly to mind. Even in 25mm the dinos could be youngsters (but still dangerous), while Tyrannosaurus becomes the similar, but smaller Allosaurus. On a cost for value basis, this set gets the highest recommendation. As the best serious effort in this field in many years, *Dinosaurs* rates as an absolute must-buy for any collector of dino miniatures.

–John Rankin

GI ASSAULT TEAM (Pinnacle/Grenadier); $11. Ten miniatures, eight water-based paints, brush, plastic pallette, painting guide. Released 1983.

GI Assault Team is a set of miniature figures designed for RPGs; with the large supply of fantasy figures in existence, it's nice to see science fiction miniatures such as these.

GI Assault Team is a finely detailed set of figures, complete with weapons, grenades, packs, heavy mortars, and an infrared machine gun. (One figure included is a figure on a rocket pack.) These figures can easily be painted for any scenario setting, from snow terrain to deep jungle.

The paintbrush that comes with the kit is not a sturdy one; the hair has a tendency to fall out in clumps. Also, the paper-thin plastic paint tray is nice to have for mixing, but be sure to anchor it down to avoid tipping it over.

Overall, this is a nicely-done kit with everything you need. It is worth its price for the figures alone.

–Michael Maloney

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE – Traveller Set 1 (Steve Jackson Games); $3. Painted by Paul Jaquays. Fifty-seven 15mm cardboard figures (assembly required), forty-five weapons markers (3/16" x 1", flat). Published 1982.

A complete science fiction beginner's set: twenty-five Player-Characters (nine female), eleven Citizens, eight Soldiers, five Pirates, five Aristocrats and three Spacehands. The citizens include barbarians, a technician and a gun-toting housewife. A code number on each base matches a listing of what the figure is intended to be – of course, there's nothing to keep you from using a Pirate figure for your player-character! Each figure consists of a cardboard strip which can be folded triangularly into a front view, back view and base; the figure may be temporarily "locked" or permanently glued together.

Everything you ever wanted in a basic science fiction set is in this set, even clones of Han Solo and Luke Skywalker, a caped mad scientist; portly baron and a statuesque Amazon Bodyguard. These figures are more stable than I expected, unlike some of the shorter figures in the 25mm line.

Though the artwork is good, it's less than crisp on close inspection (but then you don't do that during play). Some front-back views are hard to tell apart. The weapons counters are not labeled – I wish I knew what some of them were supposed to be. Jaquay's style is a bit "cartoony," the packaging is less than these figures deserve, and why are the credits printed so small and in an out of the way place?

If you want science fiction figures, start here. Cardboard is cheaper than metal – these will fill the gap until you can affort to upgrade.

– W.G. Armintrout

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GAMEABLE MOVIES

OCTOPUSSY (MGM/UA). Directed by John Glen. Produced by Albert R. Broccoli. Screenplay by Richard Maibaum and Michael G. Wilson. Photography by Alan Hume. Music by John Barry. Cast: Roger Moore (James Bond), Maud Adams (Octopussy), Louis Jourdan (Kamal), Kristina Wayborn (Magda).

Back for the 13th time, James Bond (not Sean, the other guy) cuts up in India, England, and Germany in yet another over-produced, action-stuffed epic. In this one, Bond has to save the world from a bizarre Russian general who feels nuclear war is the good life. Having hatched a perfect plot to run NATO out of Europe, he is dismayed when his more sober Communist peers veto his plan. Not to be stopped, the general covertly sets his plan into

operation, employing a number of fairly silly agents to help him blow up an American base in Germany. Enter into the picture the unfortunate Agent 009, who dies trying to get word of all this back to British Intelligence. Of course, this brings in a vengeful Bond, beautiful girls, gambling in fancy hotels, car chases, secret weapons, colorful fights, interesting escapes, and all of the other usual bits of Bondian bric-a-brac.

This time around, however, the bric-a-brac seems well-placed. Bond actually seems to be fighting in the action scenes and making love in the bedroom scenes, unlike his dressing-doll movement in some of the past films. With a few more lines in his face, he is finally beginning to look like a man in his late '30s (he may never catch up with his actual age). Delivering lines with emotion, and moving with deftness, Moore looks as much the Bond as he did in *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

The other performances range from good to so-so. Luckily, for the past 20 years, acting has never counted for much in Bond pictures. Story has, though, and this time, although it's still a bit farcical, the plotline *does* make sense. If you can accept the premise of super agents running around the world, saving it from madmen by use of skill, wit, and derring-do, then nothing in this film should put you off. Of course, despite the serious attempts to make a less foolish film this time around, *Octopussy* does suffer in places. Mostly, there is the same old air of boredom about the production. Pulling out all the stops, the producers have allowed Bond to be stabbed in the heart, sliced, drowned, bombed, and snake-wrapped, but it doesn't matter; there isn't a moment in the movie when we worry for the slightest instant that anything could happen to suave ol' James. Predictably, it doesn't. To kill Bond would be to lose the most bankable genre character ever brought to the movies.

When Bond is stabbed through the heart, several large bundles of currency he has just won in a casino stop the blade from actually piercing his pump. Money, it seems, just keeps saving Bond in picture after picture.

–C.J. Henderson

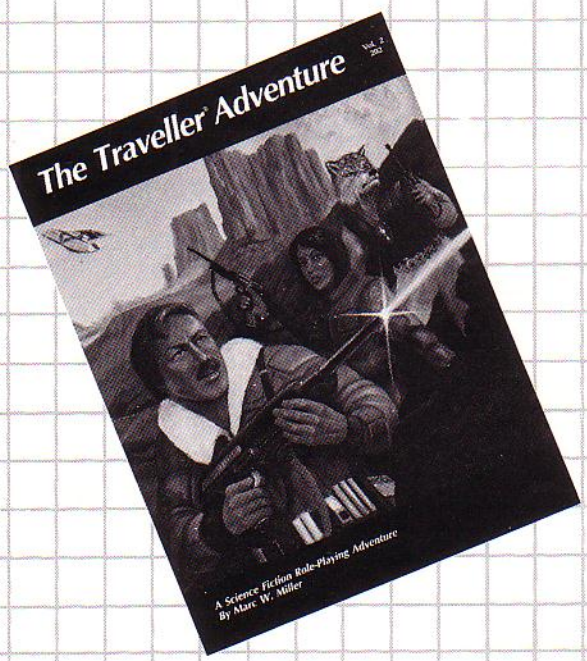
SPACEHUNTER: Adventures in the Forbiden Zone (Columbia). Filmed in 3-D. Directed by Lamont Johnson. Produced by Ivan Reitman. Screenplay by Edity Rey, David Preston, Dan Goldberg and Len Blum. Photography by Frank Tidy, D.S.C. Music by Elmer Bernstein. Cast: Peter Strauss (Wolff), Molly Ringwald (Niki), Michael Ironside (Overdog). Released 1983.

In *Spacehunter*, Wolff, a pilot graduated from the Han Solo School of Exploitive Stereotypes, responds to a distress signal from a shipwrecked spacedraft. Onboard are three lovelies who have been marooned on the plague-infested Terra Eleven. Wolff goes in search and is joined by Niki, the orphaned survivor of an abortive medical rescue mission that took place years earlier. Desperate for food and shelter, she leads Wolff into the Forbidden Zone, a region infested with strange creatures, plague-carrying mutants, underwater amazons, and the tyrannical Overdog, the renegade Earth scientist who came to power by hoarding the desperately-needed plague serum. Wolff and Niki are joined by a few other adventurers, the lot of them wandering around the planet, getting in and out of a lot of fuzzy 3-D trouble, hoping to save the girls, dodge the monsters, and beat the villain. A good time is had by all, as is expected in this kind of good-natured, low-budget thriller.

Of course, most of *Spacehunter* (a good 95%) takes place planetside, and there *are* a lot of fairly standard and cheap-looking makeup and special effects; but, in a way, they don't really matter. *Spacehunter* is good fun. It seems a safe assumption that everyone going to the film knew he was going to a "cheapie"; it is also safe to say that most who went were pleasantly surprised. *Spacehunter* moves well; it is funny, quick, and well-paced. It is no more than light amusement at best, but it never claimed to be anything else. Its only *real* problem is the 3-D. Why filmmakers persist in working in this medium is beyond most moviegoers' powers of reason. When seen without the effect, the film is much more enjoyable.

Watch for this one when it is finally released to cable, or to the video stores. This is one of those movies one gets more from in the living-room than in the theatre.

–C.J. Henderson



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Other new *Traveller* publications are **Starter Edition Traveller**, **Library Data N-Z** (Supplement 11), **Nomads of the World-Ocean** (Adventure 9), and issue 15 of **The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society.**

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SCANNER
News from the World of SF Gaming
September/October 1983 Edition

TSR Hobbies Reorganizes

TSR Hobbies, Inc., publishers of ***Dungeons and Dragons***, recently trimmed the size of its staff and split into four distinct companies.

On June 24, TSR released in excess of 40 employees – including vice president Duke Seifried – and reorganized into four companies. Each company bears the same board of directors (E. Gary Gygax, Kevin Blume, and Brian Blume). TSR, Inc. will manufacture the role-playing game line and other products, and is further divided into six departments: Games/Toys, Publishing/Crafts, Finance, Manufacturing, Marketing, and Human Resources. TSR Entertainment Corporation (name not final) is the TSR liaison with motion pictures and television. TSR Ventures is a research and licensing company. TSR Worldwide Ltd. is the international-sales and development branch.

TSR has suffered some financial setbacks in the first half of 1983. Public relations director Dietur Sturm would not confirm a link between financial problems and the reorganization, but said of the financial troubles, "More or less, what you're looking at is money coming into the company from sales and not focussed properly . . . Sales are there as far as the distributors and retailers and stores (are concerned); they have nothing to worry about."

In other TSR news, a "***Dungeons and Dragons*** Saturday Morning Show" cartoon series, which has been arranged through the Marvel Comics film division, will premier on CBS on September 17. TSR's negotiations for a possible Marvel superhero role-playing game are not yet complete. According to Marvel's Lea Satt, "There are a number of companies under consideration for that (project). No contract has been signed yet."

News Briefs

Origins Awards Winners Announced

At Origins '83 in Detroit, MI, the following awards were presented to companies and individuals in the hobby gaming field:

H.G. Wells Awards for excellence in miniatures and role-playing – Best Historical Figure Series: RAFM's 25mm Seige Equipment. Best Fantasy SF Figure Series: Ral Partha's Personalities and Things that go Bump in the Night. Best Vehicular Series: GHQ Micro Armor. Best Miniatures Rules: Striker. Best Role-Playing Rules: Behind Enemy Lines. Best Role-Playing Adventure: City Book I. Best Professional Miniatures Magazine: The Courier. Best Professional Role-Playing Magazine: The Space Gamer. All Time Best Miniatures Rules for American Civil War Land Battles: Rally Round the Flag. All Time Best Miniatures Rules for Science Fiction Battles: Striker.

Charles Roberts Awards for excellence in boardgaming – Best Pre-20th Century Board Game: Storm over Arnhem. Best Science Fiction Board Game: Illuminati. Best Fantasy Board Game: Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective. Best Professional Boardgaming Magazine: Fire & Movement. Best Adventure Game for Home Computer: Wizardry/Knight of Diamonds. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine: Journal of 20th Century Wargaming. Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame: Steve Jackson.

SCANNER CLASSIFIEDS

Scanner Classifieds are available to individuals (not to companies). $5 per insertion; limit 20 words or four lines.

SALE: 40+ games, SPI, AH, GDW; 70+ magazines, *Space Gamer* and JTAS, including #1. Send stamp. Pierre Frioud, R.R. 2, Walters Rd. Summerland, B.C., Canada, VOH 1Z0.

Tunnels & Trolls Players: I am beginning a play-by-mail ***T&T*** campaign. For more information, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Dan Lambert, 9602 S. Felton Ave., Inglewood, CAL., 90301.

New & Upcoming Releases

West End Games has just released ***Killer Angels***, an operational/strategic game of the Gettysburg campaign, which sells for $18.

Simulations Canada has just come out with ***The Wilderness*** and ***With Fire & Sword. The Wilderness*** is the second game of the trilogy which began with ***Lee At The Crossroads*** and it involves Grant's initiation into the Eastern Theater during the Civil War. ***With Fire and Sword***, by Peter Hollinger (new to Simulations Canada), is a strategic game of the 30 Years War.

Convention Calendar

July 29-31: MEMPHIS FANTASY CON. Comics and SF/Fantasy gaming con. Contact Memphis Fantasy Con, 665 South Highland, Memphis, TN 38811.

July 29-31: NANCON 88-VI. Boardgaming, miniatures, RPG. Send SASE to Nan's Game Headquarters, 118 Briargrove Center, 6100 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057.

August 5-7: OMACON 3. SF and gaming con. Contact OmaCon 3, 2518 South 167th Street, Omaha, NE 68130.

August 6: ADVENTURE EXPO '83. Gaming con. Contact Adventure Unlimited, 2707 South Franklin, Michigan City, IN 46360.

August 12-14: MIT SUMMERCON '83. Wargaming con. Contact Steve Simmons, Co-Chairman, MIT SummerCon '83, 60 Mill St., Apt. 9, Worburn, Mass. 01801.

*August 18-21: GEN CON XVI. Gaming con. Contact Gen Con, Game Convention, c/o TSR Hobbies, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

August 26-28: DRAGONFLIGHT '83. Gaming con – roleplaying boardgames, miniatures. Contact DragonFlight, PO Box 417, Seattle, Wa 98116.

*September 3-5: GATEWAY 1983. Gaming con. Contact Strategicon, P.O. Box 2577, Anaheim, CA 92804.

September 24-25: THE EMPEROR OF BUFFALO. Gaming and modeling con. Contact Chuck Gilbert, 30 Rosedale, NY 14226.

September 24-25: VALLEY CON 8. Gaming, movies, art con. Contact Valley Con Association, P.O. Box 7202, Fargo, ND 58111.

October 7-10: EARTHCON III. Science fiction gaming con. Send SASE to Earthcon III, Box 22041, Beachwood, OH. 44122.

October 14-16: SUNCOAST SKIRMISHES. Miniature gaming con. Contact Joe Brimer, 4006 Wallace Avenue, Tampa, FL 33611.

January 13-15, 1984: CRUSADER CON III. Gaming con. Contact The Auraria Gamer's Club, Metropolitan State College, 1006 11th St., Box 39, Denver, Colorado 80204.

March 9-11, 1984: COAST CON '84. Gaming, science fiction con. Contact CoastCon '84, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi, MS 39533.

SJ GAMES and SG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

PBM Update

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the November/December issue is October 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. SG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

Empire Games Inc.

Realms of Sword and Thunder

Rumors of a spring border war have become almost a certainty, with York completing its training preparations over the winter, and Gloucester is beginning a full mobilization. Coventry is increasing pressure on independent realms within its own District to declare their loyalties.

Abar of Okatar becomes the first player to agressively pursue his political ambitions with a larger realm. Following a winter of negotiation and courting the Duchy of Lancaster, he has been appointed a Wall Captain of that city, with a command of regular troops at his disposal.

Meanwhile, King Olaf has named his daughter Princess of the North, and continuing questions about King Constantine's health make it unsure what response he will give to that threat. Many players in the north are wondering what their own influence might be if there should be a conclave to select a new king soon.

– Christoper D. Peterson

Adventures By Mail

Company News: The play test of our third game, ***Capitol***, has surpassed our expectations: within the first two weeks after announcing it, we filled all of the 150 positions available. We have just licensed the European rights to ***Warboid World*** to Balrog Adventures of the U.K. All current and future players from North America will continue to deal with Adventures By Mail. All furture U.K. and EEC players should contact Balrog Adventures, 39, Chapman Ave., Maidstone, Kent, UK, ME1 5 8EJ.

Beyond the Stellar Empire

The RIP is in the news again with their recent attack on FET colony FEWLO. The RIP *Nemesis* and RIP *Jolly Roger* attacked the colony from orbit. Some FET ships in orbit at the time aided FEWLO. These ships included the FET *Austerlitz*, FET *Shapieron*, and FET *Leopard*. The RIP ships were destroyed quickly, leaving the colony with hardly a scratch.

The Flagritz activity in the Daemon System is increasing. They have captured the ISS *Rignisht* and damaged the AFT *Dusky Maiden*. The extensive IAN search for the Flagritz base world has finally been successful. They are expected to be mounting an attack that will remove the alien menace once and for all.

Brightly garbed men are reappearing at several starports in the Capellan System. Other starport hazards include some very persuasive Community ground parties that have been quite successful in recruiting new members for their bizarre religion.

The WCE has finally constructed jump engines in the transhole area. This makes them the first to do so on the other side of the Portia Blackhole. This gives the WCE a huge lead in exploration of the many unknown star systems located there.

Capps & Capps

Galac-Tac

Galaxy 1: By turn 3, there have already been four battles! It appears that at least two players are going to resolve who owns a particular system!

Galaxy 2: Has erupted into conflict. They are on their second turn.

Galaxy 3: Enters a period of quiet expansion. Have just completed setup turns.

Galaxies 4 and 5: Are setting up.

Galaxy 6: Is still open and there is plenty of time to join these fun-loving, hostile war mongrels!

–De Capps

Schubel & Son

Company News: Schubel & Son play-by-mail games and Venture Management Consulting have combined and incorporated into Schubel & Son Inc. A board of directors has been elected and incorporating is expected to generate considerable capital. ***StarMaster*** has exceeded over $250,000 in gross sales since its inception in January, 1980. Newsletters for ***StarMaster*** and ***The Tribes of Crane*** have been combined into a new newsletter. Schubel & Son is now accepting mail through the Source computer communications network – our address there is STI 516.

The Tribes of Crane:

Crane I: The political nature of the world appears to be undergoing drastic changes that will reshape its entire structure. With the collapse of the Federation of City States after its war with the Rainbow Empire and the decline of the Grand Alliance as a significant power, a great power vacuum has developed into which the Halton Factor has stepped. The Halton Factor recently made its appearance on Crane I and is working quickly to establish itself. Older established powers such as the Horde,

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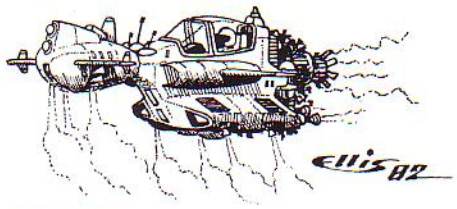
Rainbow Empire, First Empire and the Dark Union forces under uShake view the Halton Factor with suspicion.

Crane II: The port city of Mul in western Crane has seen nearly continuous battles for over a month. In what are being called the 'Birthday Wars' (the fighting started near the birthdays of several Tatinn leaders), the fighting for Mul is only a beginning. The fighting began as City Leader Draco and his ally, Councilman Blackhand attempted to oust the rebellious city shamen led by Shaman Meney. Draco's attack was poorly timed and planned and ended in disaster.

Meney and his allies quickly summoned and received aid from the Tatinn Alliance, which made Meney able to counter attack and drive Draco from the city and capture and execute Blackhand. Draco fled to his allies of the Western Alliance of Tribes (W.A.O.T.). For the next several weeks battles raged throughout the city as the W.A.O.T. forces attempted to return Draco to power. Eventually the Tatinn forces were victorious and Draco was forced to flee.



StarMaster:

Undetected by alien sensors, a vast deep space fleet of the Lyranian Star Imperium completed its long voyage from the Central Galaxy and entered the NorthEast Galaxy. At the core of the vast armada laid several of the huge floating Mega-cities, the production and supply centers of the fleet. The fleet commanders quicly dispatched exploration fleets. In the Lusty system they discovered an inhabited planet defended by a weak home fleet and two vast War World '2h's of the Dragorn Empire, the Dragorns were rumored to be the most powerful force in the entire North-East galaxy.

As a test of strength it was decided to attack and destroy the planetary defenses, bombard the home world and then await the Dragorn's response. Seven Lyranian Battle Globes phased into the system and engaged the defending Dragorn War Worlds, and both sides were destroyed. The second wave of Lyranian ships, against seven Battle Globes, engaged the home defenses of the Dragorn's allies, the Bolaneese Empire. The first generation Bolaneese ships were no match for the seventh generation Lyranians and were completely destroyed.

With the destruction of the naval defenses, the third wave of the Lyranian strike force entered the system and bombarded the Bolaneese home world with thirty Earthquake Drill bombs. The surface of the planet heaved and buckled killing billions of Bolaneese. The planet surface ruptured in many places causing huge plumes of molten lava to spew forth on the planets surface. Quietly the Lyranians withdrew from the system and waited the Dragorns response to the 'test'.

–Duane Wilcoxson

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Universe II

Quadrant I: More Etuel systems have been attacked by the bandits of the Ixtli and Regajian fleets. Nusakan, Alkaruops and Vindemiatrix have fallen and Auva is under attack. The surviving Etuel systems are equipping themselves with force fields to preclude future takeovers. The UES knights have vowed to strike back at the outlaws and retake the lost systems.

Quadrant II: UES starships are rallying to the defense of the Etuel systems. In the Subra area, several colonial complexes have established elaborate trading networks. Rumors of a lost civilization being discovered are spreading from ship to ship.

Quadrant III: With the threat of the Muar Empire eliminated, there is renewed friction between the Terran Alliances. Some are not content withthe share of the quadrant they have been allocated by the treaties.

Quadrant IV: The growing activity in the Kraz/Algorab has caused much concern among the alliances using these star systems as their trading bases. Rumors of renewed Regajian activity and expansion by the Unity Confederation are causing empire beacon nets to be run continuously. UES *Claymore* has claimed a victory over UES *Sir Galahad*. No indication of the extent of the damage was available.

Regajian Empire: The empire has stabilized again. A tenuous truce still exists between the RSS and IXV ships. All the various factions of the Ragajian Empire are now established in their respective areas and are building strong bases.

Ixtli Empire: New elections are in process to select a leader for the IXV ships. Several factions are eager to have control of the leadership. Ixtli forces now control half of Quadrant I.

Muar Empire: Our main star system in quadrant III has been temporarily lost to the UES raiders who invaded our peaceful empire. Marik was killed in the senseless bloodbath that followed the surrender of Alev.

Terra II

Northern Hemisphere: As trade with the northern cities increases, the automatic price adjustments force the merchant tribes to carefully evaluate the cargo they choose to carry. The volume of silver being produced by the mining operations west of Vinchu will

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certainly drive the price down. While the miners will receive less, there will be the opportunity for merchants to transport it to Nayin for the higher prices paid there.

The port city of Abbasi has turned into a popular trading center. Located on the west coast only about fifty miles south of the tundra belt, it is the natural resupply point for tribes as they move out of the northern mountain passes.

An enterprising tribe is building a trading post approximately 100 miles north of Diwal. Business should be brisk as later tribes make their way south and need a source of equipment and supplies. No price structure has as yet been announced.

Southern Hemisphere: The tribes in the south are encountering great difficulty finding thier way north. Several are floundering in massive fields of snow and ice. Once free of the mountain passes many tribes are encountering another mountain range. It seems the southern hemisphere is very rugged and will require much skill to survive.

The price for gems at Halda is reported to be very high. The first tribe to reach the city was fortunate enough to have found over twenty gems. These were traded for weapons and the tribe turned south to attack arriving tribes.

The Horse Wanderers tribe is faced with the choice of moving east of the mountains toward Flyssa or west of the mountains into the plains of the central plateau. No villages have been encountered in any of the southern regions.

Conquest II

The first game of *Conquest II* is being conducted in the land of Kirinburg. The countryside appears to have a mountain range approximately 100 miles long running east to west. In the center of this range is a rugged pass. There are ten fortified citidals which have been built in the surrounding plains. While no reports of battles have been received, a strong cavalry army was sighted. Their battle flag was solid gray with a symbol of two crossed swords in the center.

Scouts sent out by the Baron of Amber have been seen far from their village, as have those from the village of Valhalla.

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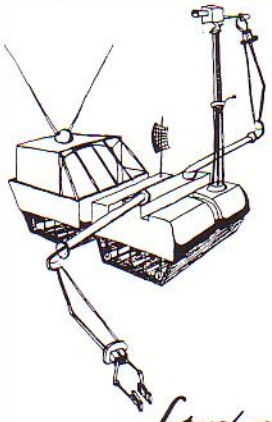

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StarMaster

Air screams around your ships as they enter the atmosphere. Missile-launchers fire deafeningly to port and starboard while atmosphere-fighters drop in shrieking dives from their hangers below. Warriors, tightly clenching their weapons, check their pressure suits one last time and climb in grim silence into their landing shuttles. In the distance five more heavy cruisers of your empire are firing and unloading their cargo, their hulls gleaming crimson in the light of the red sun above.

This is not a drill. Already laser and missile fire from the mile-wide guardian fortresses below have turned the sky into an exploding nightmare of smoke, fire, and fragmented metal. Planes and shuttles twist and dodge down towards a landscape rapidly becoming an inferno of flame and radiation.

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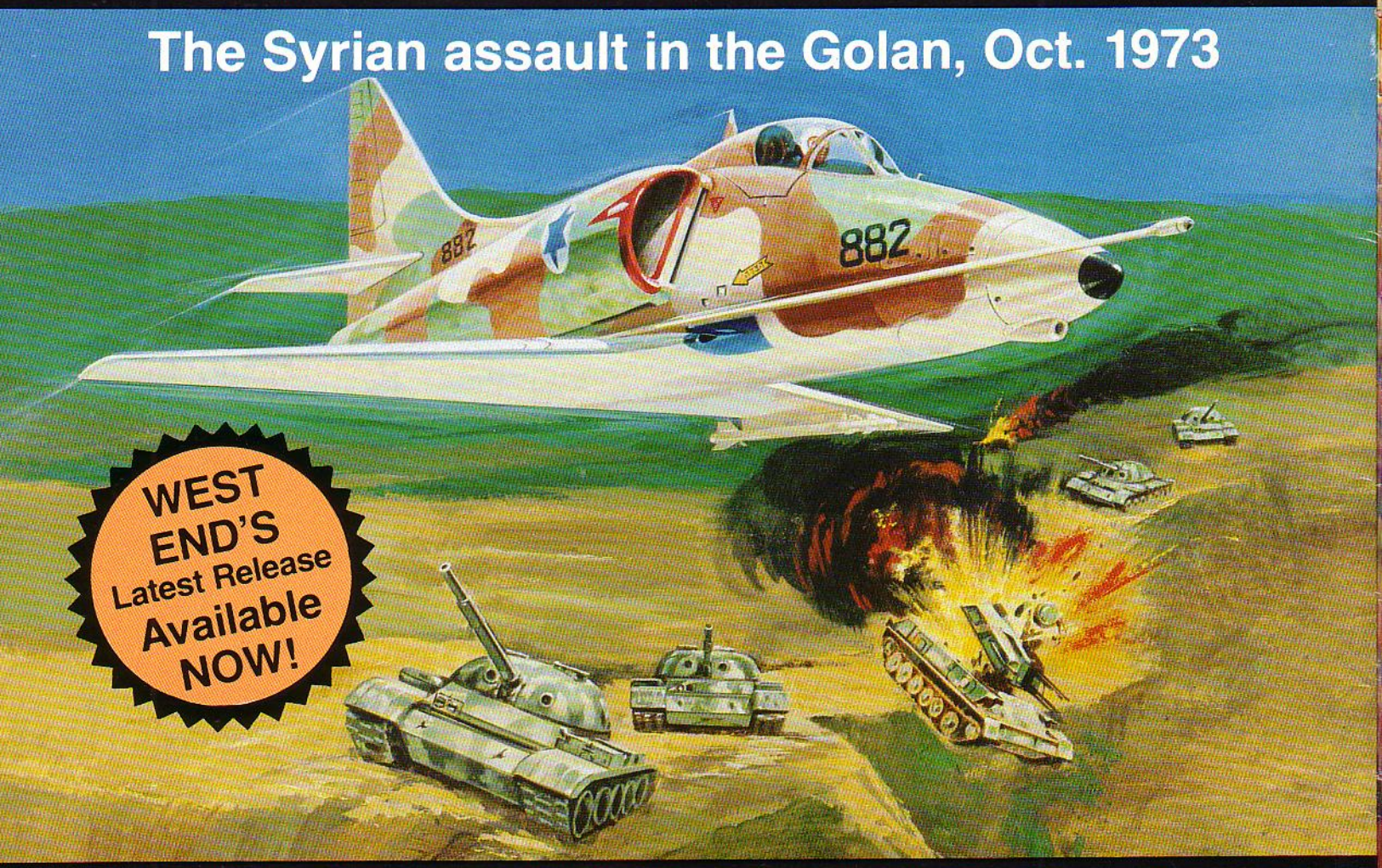

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